THE END OF INDIA? BY AKEEL BILGRAMI

JUNE 10, 1991 • $2.95

THE NEW REPUBLIC

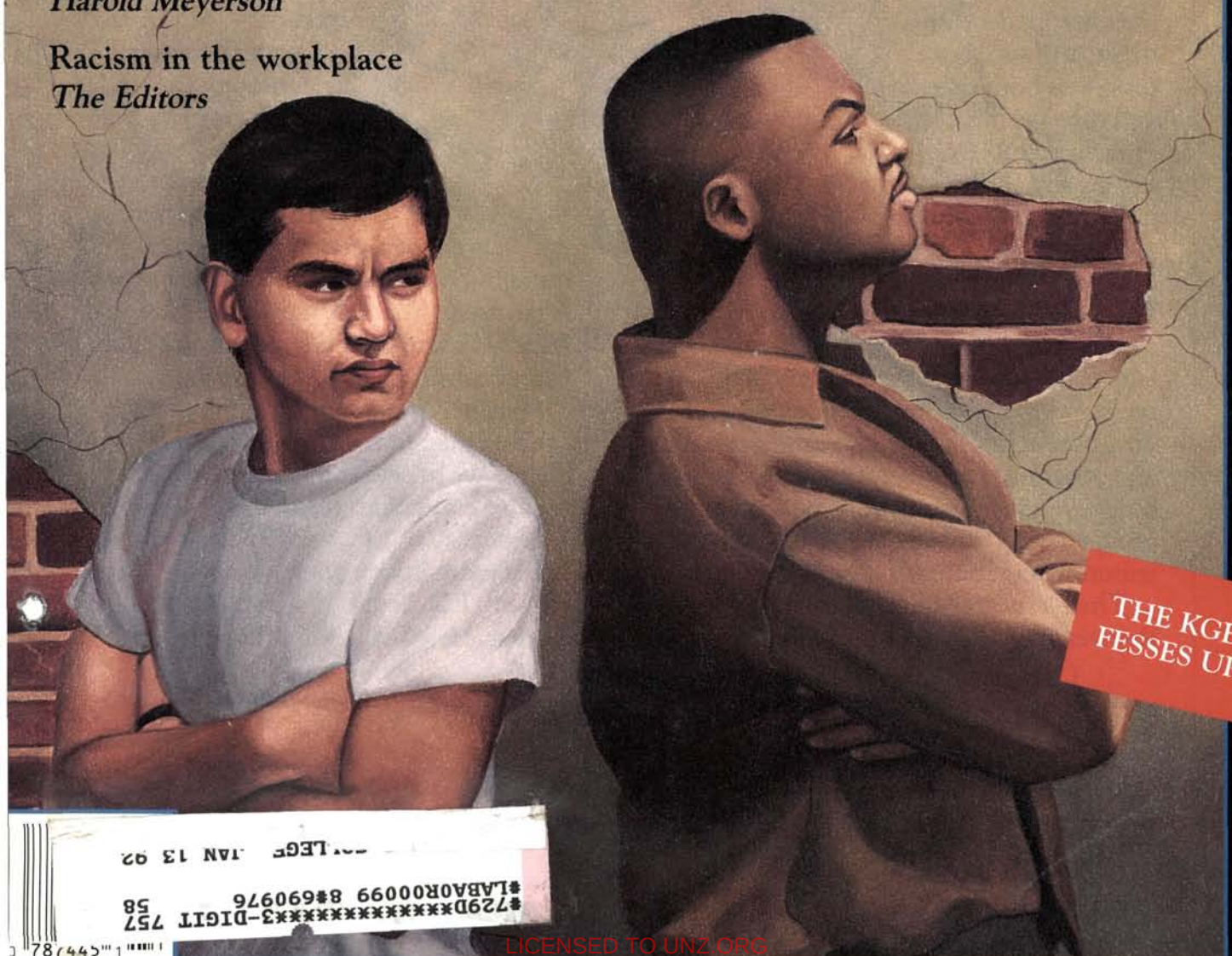
Sidney Blumenthal: Claiborne Pell, space cadet • Karen Lehrman: Anna Quindlen, sexist

RACIAL RIFTS

Hispanics, blacks, and the Washington riot
Charles Lane, Peter Skerry & Michael Hartman

Why L.A. liberals won't dump Chief Gates
Harold Meyerson

Racism in the workplace
The Editors



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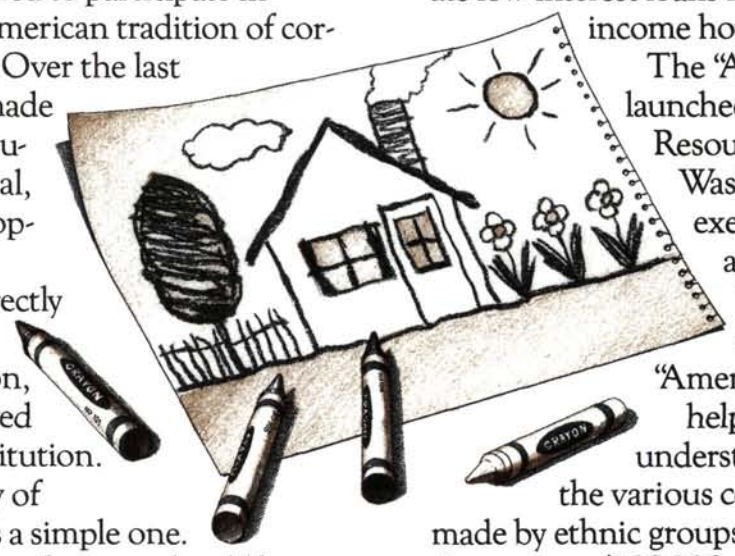

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FROM WASHINGTON

Goretax

Having jilted Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan's idea for a cut in the Social Security tax, Democrats have a second chance to get on the right side of the tax issue with a new proposal from Representative Tom Downey and Senator Al Gore. Called the "Working Family Tax Relief Act" (or is it the "Family Security and Tax Relief Act"? Gore has it both ways in his press release), it would replace the income tax personal exemption for children, currently $2,300, with an $800 tax *credit* per child.

Unlike a tax exemption, which is worth more to people in higher brackets, a dollar-for-dollar tax credit is worth the same to everyone. For taxpayers in the 15 percent bracket, today's $2,300 exemption is worth $345, so Gore and Downey are proposing to more than double it. Those in higher brackets would gain somewhat less. Gore and Downey also propose to help the working poor by making their child credit partially refundable for those who pay little or no income tax, and by expanding the already existing earned income tax credit.

Have I forgotten anything? Oh yes, this generosity would be paid for by adding a new top bracket of 35 percent, starting at around $140,000 a year, and a surcharge that, in effect, raises the top rate to 39 percent on incomes over $250,000. Overall, 134 million people would get a tax cut and 15 million would get a tax increase. Income taxes on a family of four making $35,000 to $50,000—middle America—would drop around 8 percent.

There are already rumblings from Republicans about "class warfare" and "the politics of envy." Why is it *not* class warfare when Republican administrations shift the tax burden onto the poor and middle class, while it *is* class warfare when Democrats—finally—point this out and try to rectify it? Most Americans pay more of their income in federal taxes now than before the Reagan revolution. Only the top slice has enjoyed a tax cut.

(The single most misleading statistic around is that affluent people—say, the top 10 percent—pay a bigger share of total taxes than they did fifteen years ago. It's true. But that's because they have a bigger share of total income. Income inequality increased. As a fraction of their own income—which is what *counts*—top people's taxes have gone down; others' have gone up.)

It is very sweet for Republicans to deplore the "divisiveness" of an appeal to class interests, but they have used vicious us-versus-them politics successfully in every national campaign of recent years. Understandably, their attacks have been along cultural rather than financial lines, aimed at a largely fictional elite of flag-burning, pornography-loving, prayer-hating, inside-the-Beltway Harvard liberals. Compared with that, it seems fairly benign for Democrats to assert the class interests of people making less than $140,000 a year.

Nevertheless, Gore and Downey deserve credit for guts. Especially Gore, who is risking his treasured reputation for caution and moderation. The main advantage of their tax cut proposal over Moynihan's is that Gore-Downey would pay for itself. But, given recent Republican skill in demagoguing the tax issue, that is also its main disadvantage.

Progressive purists may quibble with the details of the Gore-Downey plan. Why should families making up to $75,000 a year get hundreds of dollars of savings while a childless worker on the edge of poverty gets nothing? Answer: "families" are the flavor of the month in political circles, and the benefit for the upper middle class is a strategic bribe. Surely it's permissible for Democrats to be a little bit clever. And the complaint that today's tax code is tilted against families is a legitimate one. Even the Gore-Downey tax credit is worth less than the dependent tax exemption was worth in the 1950s and 1960s.

The objection from the right will be of course that higher taxes will destroy incentives, kill the goose that lays the golden egg, and so on. Keep in mind that every dollar taken from somebody in higher taxes is saved by someone else in lower taxes. It's true—and a legitimate criticism—that the hit on the rich takes the form of higher tax *rates* while the saving for others does not take the form of lower rates. Supply side theology holds that what affects incentives is the tax rate on the next dollar you might earn, rather than your average tax burden. It would be easy to design a progressive tax shift of equal size by closing loopholes for the rich, without affecting their marginal rates, while lowering marginal rates for the working poor and middle class. But I doubt the opposition to such a plan would be much less than what Gore-Downey will face.

The effective top income tax rate today is already about 35 percent for people making between $140,000 and $190,000, thanks to some complicated deduction phase-out formulas (enacted last year) that Gore-Downey would abolish. So the opponents of Gore-Downey will essentially be defending the pocketbooks of people making more than $190,000 a year. And even those in the $250,000-plus range would still face tax rates (including state taxes) no higher than those of our fiercest economic rivals, Germany and Japan.

The Republican tax bills of the Reagan era managed to disguise a tax shift from the rich to everyone else as a tax cut for everybody. The genius of the Gore-Downey proposal, if it is played right, is that it strips bare these mechanics and gives people an honest choice. Is the majority willing to pay more so that the rich can pay less? There is a serious intellectual argument that the rich are the particular engines of prosperity in the economy, and that therefore the lesser classes should be pleased to reduce the tax burden on the rich—*even if that means paying more taxes themselves.* Conservative writers who are not running for office make this argument all the time. I would love to hear a Republican politician make it.

Other tax proposals dot the legislative landscape. President Bush is still pushing his capital gains cut. Senator Lloyd Bentsen wants to restore Individual Retirement Account deductions for all taxpayers. Some Republican "family" types want to double the personal exemption. Proponents of all three decline to say how the money will be made up. Bentsen's IRAs, for example, would cost $5 billion a year. Like Bush's capital gains cut, it would make the tax system even less progressive, since IRAs are already available to low-income people. It would have a negligible effect on savings, its ostensible purpose.

Gore-Downey would not promote savings. In fact, it would have somewhat the opposite effect, since poorer people spend more of their after-tax income than richer people. But the other side of the same coin is that, without increasing the deficit by a penny, it would be a stimulus to a sluggish economy—the virtue now dubiously being claimed for Bush's capital gains break. Politically, distributionally, economically it makes terrific sense. Why can't the Democrats, for once, rally round?

MICHAEL KINSLEY

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-- James S. Brady --
President Reagan's Press Secretary
Shot on March 30, 1981 by John Hinckley

Please Help Me Save Lives

"Add your voice to mine. Help me beat the gun lobby.

I know firsthand the daily pain of a gunshot wound. But I'm one of the lucky ones. I survived. Since I was shot ten years ago, more than 200,000 men, women and children have been killed here in handgun fire. That's more Americans than we lost in the Korean, Vietnam, Panama and Persian Gulf conflicts, combined. And America's random gun violence rages on.

I'm calling on Congress to pass a common sense law -- the Brady Bill -- requiring a seven-day "cooling-off" period before the purchase of a handgun so police can run a thorough background check on the buyer. Seven days to cool-off a hot temper. Every major police group supports this public safety measure.

So why hasn't Congress passed the Brady Bill? Because too many Members of Congress are afraid of the hardcore gun lobby and too many take the gun lobby's PAC money. The gun lobbyists say a seven day wait is "inconvenient." I'd like to see one of them try spending a day in my wheelchair.

Can we beat the gun lobby? Yes! Thanks to citizens like you, we passed the Brady Bill in the House of Representatives -- despite the gun lobby spending millions of dollars against us. How did we do it? People across America contacted their legislators in Washington and demanded action.

Let your Senators know you want an end to gun violence -- before someone you love becomes a statistic."

Now the Brady Bill is before the U.S. Senate.
We can pass it if you help me now. It's real easy. Here's how.

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Help me "cool-off" gun violence and make America safer.

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CORRESPONDENCE

Pious readings

To the editors:

In his May 27 Diarist ("Venial Sins") Fred Barnes talks about George Bush's and Jim Baker's religiosity and says that people should not question it, particularly those in the political community and the press. And it is very true that they do.

But then he quotes a Gallup Poll that says many people believe in the existence of God. That of course is exactly why Mr. Bush and Mr. Baker have these public displays of religiosity, because it squares with the public notion of what our leaders should be. All Mr. Barnes has to do is read Machiavelli regarding the proper uses of religion, and he will see that doubting President Bush's motives, particularly when he has made a decision to unleash one of the most brutal and severe wars in history, is not something that ought to be written off.

JOHN JORDAN
Washington, D.C.
(Via 900 number)

P.C. coercion

To the editors:

Those who pooh-pooh the concern over "political correctness" have been taking the line that it's all voluntary, that no one on campus is *compelled* to imbibe multiculturalism (or at least that the new studies are no more compulsory than the traditional canon has been). Thus Michael Kinsley points out in "P.C. B.S." (TRB, May 20) that "Western culture" at Stanford was a required course, says those who want it restored are therefore the ones "demanding 'correctness,'" and observes that "Stanford students may still take all the courses they want about dead white males. The question is whether they should be forced to."

At Berkeley, force is indeed the question. Berkeley, unlike Stanford, has had no campus-wide requirement in "Western culture" or anything else. Beginning this fall, however, it has one: all entering freshmen must take one of the new courses in "American Cultures." Courses meeting this requirement must address "culture and ethnicity in the history and society of the United States." Each course must focus on at least three of the "five main racial/cultural groups in American society"—declared to be African Americans, American Indians, Asian Americans, Chicano/Latinos, and (by afterthought) European Americans.

All other courses at Berkeley will remain optional (except as required by a student's major); American Cultures will be the sole universal requirement. Which foot wears the shoe of compulsion?

STEPHEN R. BARNETT
Berkeley, California

The writer is professor of law at the University of California, Berkeley.

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The New Republic welcomes correspondence from its readers. A fast, new way of doing this is our new 900 line. Deliver your opinions—long-pondered or spontaneous—over the phone. They will be considered for publication on this page along with regular letters to the editor. A call costs $1.25 a minute.

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To the editors:

Michael Kinsley is presumably playing the devil's advocate in his surprising TRB column. If he really believes that the issue has been exaggerated by conservatives, then he has not read the accounts in TNR, including the wonderful review of *Illiberal Education* by Eugene Genovese, or the many columns in *The Village Voice* by Nat Hentoff. He has certainly not read Dinesh D'Souza's book, which he dismisses with an ad hominem remark rather than addressing the arguments and evidence. In fact, the threat to academic freedom has been all too real and has probably had a chilling effect even at colleges and universities where nothing has happened as yet.

There are really three issues at stake. One lies in the direction in which the curriculum is being pushed, often by non-academic pressures. A second involves aggressive attacks on free inquiry. Both are closely tied to the development of affirmative action goals, which, in some cases, have come to resemble closely hiring and admission quotas. Mr. Kinsley hardly deals with any of the issues, though he does mention the conflict over a former Western civilization course at Stanford. The course was really restructured as the result of pressure rather than discussion. As Mr. Kinsley notes, it just might be wise to eliminate the requirement altogether. Nevertheless, I very much doubt that he believes Frantz Fanon is more important than John Locke to include in a required course about great ideas or that his radical Marxist interpretations offer real insight into non-European cultures and societies.

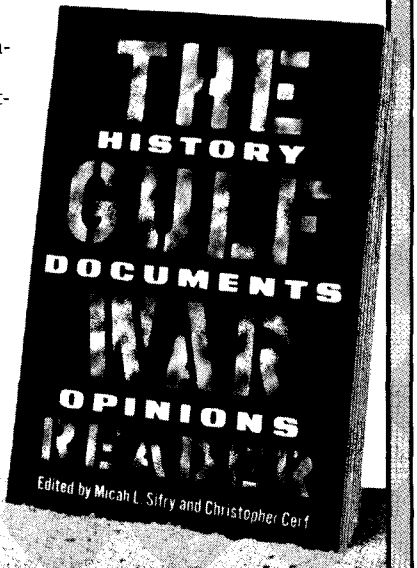
This is the first time I've seen the assertion that 70 percent of American univer-

continued on page 41

"A MUST-READ FOR THE INFORMED CITIZEN."
—ERIC UTNE, editor-in-chief, *Utne Reader*

"The authoritative statement from different points of view about the continuing tragedy in the Gulf and Middle East... Historical documents, articles from leading analysts, and political commentary will leave the reader reeling from the intrigue, misperception, animosity, xenophobia, and skulduggery which is the story of oil, politics, great-power rivalries, colonial grabs and nationalist yearnings."—MARCUS RASKIN, Institute for Policy Studies, and co-editor of *The Vietnam Reader*

Contributors include: Noam Chomsky, Walter Cronkite, Theodore Draper, Elizabeth Drew, Barbara Ehrenreich, Thomas L. Friedman, David Halberstam, Christopher Hitchens, Michael Kinsley, Lewis H. Lapham, Bernard Lewis, Judith Miller, Edward W. Said, Robert Scheer, Daniel Yergin.



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THE NEW REPUBLIC

JUNE 10, 1991

IN BLACK AND WHITE

It's rare that the issue of racial discrimination in the workplace is the subject of more than conjecture and hysteria, which is why the recent report by the Urban Institute on racism in hiring for entry-level jobs comes as such a relief. It contains some of the most reliable data ever on who actually discriminates against whom, where, how—and even when—in the job market. Bravely, it treats affirmative action as discrimination—not merely as some completely cost-free panacea. And it deploys a social science methodology, which, though limited, provides perhaps the most reliable way of testing the extent to which Americans actually discriminate against each other.

It's a shame, then, that the report's conclusions were simply portrayed in the press as proof that old-fashioned white-on-black racial discrimination is still endemic. (This was not simple misrepresentation: the report's conclusion itself described such discrimination as "widespread and pervasive.") The report was further interpreted as bolstering the argument for the civil rights bill now before Congress and was deemed to have knocked a hole in the fashionable idea that affirmative action is now a greater problem than old-fashioned bigotry. In fact, the evidence presented in the report makes for far more complicated reading than these easy conclusions suggest. Indeed, part of its persuasiveness lies in the very complexity of the portrait it paints.

The institute hired twenty male college students—ten white and ten black—and carefully matched them in black-white pairs so that each had virtually identical skills, résumés, appearances, and demeanors. They were then sent out in Washington, D.C., and Chicago to apply for a range of jobs advertised in newspapers. Their progress was monitored not simply to see whether one received a job offer and the other did not, but to examine each stage of the application process, to check for the subtlest of racial bias. In all, more than 400 separate job searches were subsequently thrown into a computer.

In 80 percent of the job searches, both the white and the black applicants were offered equivalent jobs. In 15 percent, the white received a job offer over the black; in 5 percent, the black got the job, and the white didn't. When the study looked further for evidence of discrimination at earlier stages of the application process—verbal discouragement over the phone, long waiting periods for interviews, and so on—it found another 7 percent of the job searches revealed some level of discrimination. That left 73 percent of the job searches with no evidence of discrimination at all.

What are we to make of this relatively low level of bias? Frankly, we think it's good news. We don't know, of course, exactly what a similar report would have found, say, in 1961, because such a report does not exist. But it doesn't take much agonizing to recognize that 73 percent fairness represents something close to a transformation in racial attitudes in a matter of

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decades. There are caveats, of course: 27 percent bias is still 27 percent too much. But the visceral, structural, overwhelming injustice of not so long ago has been dramatically reduced.

The report contained further twists of encouraging news. There was no evidence that racial discrimination against blacks occurs more often in suburban and predominantly white neighborhoods than in the inner city. In Washington, D.C., all government jobs were excluded, suggesting that, given the high level of affirmative action in government employment, blacks probably fare better in D.C. than the study suggests. In Chicago, blacks were actually *more* likely than whites to receive favorable treatment in the early stages of job application.

There was only sporadic evidence, moreover, that the more sophisticated the job and the skills required, the more likely it was that blacks would be subject to discrimination. In some cases, in fact, the reverse seemed to be the case. The study found, for example, that if you were black, you would be least likely to suffer discrimination in applying for white-collar positions in hotels, banking, retail, and real estate in Chicago. You were most likely to suffer discrimination in applying for a blue-collar position in retail in Washington, D.C. (All in all, by the way, D.C. comes across as a far more discriminatory city than Chicago.) What could be happening, of course, is that white-collar employers are more likely to hire with affirmative action foremost in their minds. But the data, even here, are too mixed to draw any firm conclusions.

Where racial discrimination is at its most personal and direct—when an interviewer is of a different race than the interviewee—the report uncovered an interesting finding. It could not find any statistically significant relationship between the race of the interviewer and the race of the successful applicant. In the only slight caveat to this, the report found that a black interviewer was much more likely to discriminate racially in favor of a black interviewee than a white interviewer with a white interviewee, but the number of cases in which this happened was too small to be statistically reliable. In other words, our traditional view of the racist job interviewer is simply not substantiated in real life.

The Urban Institute report tells a largely convincing story that few people in today's civil rights controversies wish to hear. It offends the right by showing that old-fashioned discrimination is still clearly a greater problem than affirmative action in those less elevated professions where reverse discrimination has yet to take hold. (It tells us nothing, of course, about whether affirmative action is the key to eliminating old-fashioned discrimination; or, for that matter, about whether it actually makes matters worse.) But its key finding is one that will surely offend the established "civil rights" lobby more. It is that both forms of discrimination, though deplorable, are actually the exception in today's American work environment. They certainly cannot begin to account for the scope of the crisis in much of black America today. Focusing on them, as the Democrats' obsessive civil rights bill posturing does, is a fatal distraction from the vital matter at hand.

The vital matter, as we have noted many times before, is that far too few black Americans can enter the job market with competitive skills in the first place. It is that the collapse of the black family, the inner-city drug epidemic, the violent crime that now besieges a central part of black America, and the decline of public education have made the premise of the Urban Institute study a blithe and distant dream. This report is fascinating and welcome. But it should stand as a goad to mobilize against the real tragedy, rather than as an invitation to be obsessed by a false one.

NOTEBOOK

WHAT'S YOUR PREFERENCE?: Do you think that the recent Urban Institute report, as detailed in our editorial, strengthens or weakens the case for passing the Civil Rights Act now before Congress? The number for our Sound Off line, as you probably know by now, is 1-900-726-6671.... Our poll two weeks ago found 74 percent in favor of the fast track path to a free trade agreement with Mexico.

SOLDIERS OF FORTUNE: Thanks to a failed Reagan administration scheme to overthrow Muammar Qaddafi in 1988, 350 American-trained Libyan commandos are now apartment-hunting in New York. Captured by Chad during a Libya-Chad border fight in 1988, the soldiers were freed from POW camps by the United States in exchange for serving as an anti-Qaddafi brigade. But when Qaddafi's own commandos overthrew the Chadian government in December 1990, the guerrillas were sent scrambling. Zaire agreed to give them asylum until the United States cut its military aid. Then Kenya agreed to take them in, but subsequently changed its mind. Now the Libyan soldiers/Chadian POWs/American guerrillas have been deemed Kenyan refugees by the State Department. Under this new designation, they arrived in the United States on May 17, to be relocated under the U.S. refugee program. They will be given work, we expect, as Irish bartenders, Italian tailors, and French chefs.

T-SHIRT JUSTICE: Alice's maxim of "Verdict first, trial afterward" well describes the ongoing proceedings in Kuwait City. People accused of collaborating with Iraq during the war are being tortured, tried without evidence, denied access to lawyers, and are receiving absurdly harsh sentences for trivial offenses. In the most

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celebrated instance a man got fifteen years in prison for wearing a Saddam T-shirt. No one should be surprised that the Kuwaiti monarchy lacks respect for due process and the rule of law. Nor, unfortunately, does President Bush's nonchalance come as any revelation. He spoke only in the vaguest of generalities when asked about the trials. "I can understand there's a lot of bitterness from those Kuwaitis who saw their country raped and pillaged," he said. The liberation of Kuwait, we surmise, has terminated.

TRUTH IN ACRONYMS: In a recent letter to *The Washington Post*, Anheuser-Busch executive Joseph Castellano took the paper to task for an article that failed to discuss the beer industry's efforts to discourage alcohol abuse on college campuses. "Anheuser-Busch is also a major sponsor of a student-initiated and -run program called Boost Alcohol Consciousness Concerning the Health of University Students, which encourages students to develop responsible attitudes toward alcohol beverages," Mr. Castellano wrote. "BACCHUS has chapters on campuses in forty-eight states."

WHAT YOU MEAN 'SHE,' WHITE MAN?: According to a recent story in *The Washington Post*, the American Catholic bishops' letter on the role of women in the Church "says women 'should be equal as persons' in the Church. But the draft document, which took nearly nine years to prepare, says, 'The Church ... does not consider herself authorized to admit women to priestly ordination.'" ●

The end of an unfair trade practice.

DUMPSTERS

By Robert B. Reich

A fundamental principle of American trade, first codified in the Antidumping Act of 1921, is that foreigners must not "dump" their goods in the United States. Dumping is one of those acts whose reprehensibility is assumed in the verb used to describe it. There is no internationally agreed-upon definition of what constitutes dumping. Under American law, to "dump" is to export to the United States a product priced below what the U.S. government estimates to be the cost of producing it abroad—including overhead and profit.

In 1974 the Smith-Corona Corporation, which still makes half of all the portable typewriters purchased in the United States, filed the first of several complaints with the U.S. government charging its Japanese rival, Brother Industries, with dumping portable typewriters in America, and thus causing Smith-Corona to lose sales. Five years later, after much wrangling, the United States imposed an import fee on Brother's typewriters, calculated to eliminate such unfairness. When sales of Brother's higher-tech electronic typewriters and word processors continued to grow in America, Smith-Corona arranged for import duties to be imposed on them as well. Dozens of Washington lawyers earned a good living throughout the 1980s doing little else but filing dumping complaints against Brother and seeking modifications of old anti-dumping orders.

But even as Smith-Corona continued to complain about Brother, two things occurred that altered Smith-Corona's own relationship to the United States. In 1986 Smith-Corona was purchased by London-based Hanson PLC, one of Britain's ten largest conglomerates. Then, a year later, most of Smith-Corona's manufacturing operations were transferred to Singapore—from where it now ships more than a million typewriters a year back to the United States. Few Americans any longer make Smith-Corona typewriters. In the last two years Smith-Corona has cut 970 jobs at its manufacturing plant in Cortland, New York, while adding more than 1,300 workers at its Singapore facility.

Meanwhile, Brother altered *its* relationship to the United States as well. In 1987 it opened a new $13 million typewriter manufacturing factory in Bartlett, Tennessee. The factory now employs 450 Americans and produces 600,000 typewriters annually for the American market. Brother no longer imports any portable typewriters from Japan.

Smith-Corona blames its move to Southeast Asia on Brother. "We were forced to go to Singapore by Japanese price-cutting," said Lee Thompson, Smith-Corona's chief executive. Brother blames its move to America on Smith-Corona. "The anti-dumping levies and trade frictions caused by Smith-Corona prompted us to make our typewriters in America," said a spokesman for Brother.

Several weeks ago Brother and Smith-Corona came full circle in their swap of national identities. Brother filed with the U.S. government an anti-dumping complaint against Smith-Corona, charging that Smith-Corona was selling its Singaporean typewriters in the United States at cut-rate prices and thus injuring Brother's earnings. "Ever since Smith-Corona cut the retail price on its cheapest portable electric typewriters to $99, we've been losing money," a Brother executive told me indignantly. Smith-Corona denies the charge and claims that, besides, Brother has been circumventing the old anti-dumping order against it by simply assembling in its Tennessee factory below-cost typewriter components coming from Japan. (In fact, the circuit boards, plastic housings, and ribbons

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found in Brother typewriters are made in America, but most of the electronic components come from Singapore.)

A team of Commerce Department officials is now sorting through the evidence and won't have a final verdict for a while. But regardless of which side wins, it seems appropriate to pause and ask why we have an anti-dumping law at all, now that the American economy has gone global. Who, exactly, benefits if a Japanese-owned company is protected from the low-price competition of a British-owned company that manufactures in Singapore for sale in the United States? Surely not American consumers, investors, or workers. The only true beneficiaries are the Washington lawyers who continue to file legions of anti-dumping complaints (so far, this year's total already exceeds all of the complaints filed in 1990).

There still may be reason to prevent big companies with deep pockets from cutting their prices in order to drive their competition out of business, so they can raise prices even higher than before. But to the extent that this occurs, it's as much a domestic problem as an international one. Our anti-trust laws, properly enforced, should be adequate to guard against such predatory behavior—domestic or foreign. The anti-dumping law has no redeeming social value, and should be dumped. ●

The KGB fesses up.

BOMBSHELL

By Ronald Radosh and Eric Breindel

According to an article in a recent issue of the Soviet weekly *New Times*, the KGB has just decided to disclose what has remained a mystery for over fifty years: how the USSR—via espionage—gained access to classified information related to the development of the world's first atom bomb. The author, KGB Colonel Vladimir Matveyevich Chikov, a senior officer in the KGB's new public information office, claims to base his account on the secret archives of the KGB, particularly file 13676, to which, he maintains, he is one of only six men to have gained access in over fifty-five years. Chikov makes three major points—all of which answer questions on Soviet espionage that have perplexed observers for decades.

He tells us first of all that academician Igor Kurchatov, the late head of the Soviet A-bomb project, explicitly said that Soviet espionage "accounted for 50 percent of the project's success." Soviet intelligence had cabled chief Lavrenti Beria in May 1942, informing him in code that agents had obtained top-secret papers dealing with research in Britain focused on developing an atom bomb. Chikov cites—and quotes verbatim from—a cable sent by Anatoly Gorsky, head of the NKVD network in London from 1940 to 1943, to Pavel Fitin, chief of an NKVD directorate (the KGB's predecessor) in Moscow.

In March 1942 Stalin had received a top-secret message from Gorsky, informing him that the Germans were working on a nuclear weapon. A session of the State Committee on Defense was immediately convened, at which physicist Abram Joffe told the delegates they were "fighting against heavy odds"; although they knew there was a solution to "the atomic bomb problem," they did not have the expertise of the top-flight scientists working for the Western allies. Meeting immediately thereafter with Pavel Fitin and Vasily Zarubin, who were on their way to New York to serve as intelligence agents, Stalin instructed them to "obtain information on the latest secret weapons developed in the U.S.A.—specifically, on the atomic bomb," reports Chikov.

The NKVD also set up "Laboratory No. 2," under Igor Kurchatov, which worked with an NKVD subsection for gathering intelligence on military technology. Its head, Leoniv Kvasnikov, went to New York in 1943 to head Soviet intelligence on scientific matters. On June 14, 1942, a coded message was sent to agents in New York, Berlin, and London, informing agents abroad that they were to take "any measures you think fit" to obtain material on "the theoretical and practical aspects of the atomic bomb project." That message from Fitin, and another one on the same date from Zarubin, who was by then in New York, informed Moscow Center that "all the uranium fission laboratories found ... started functioning in accordance with a single plan code-named Manhattan Project." The message detailed the activity at Los Alamos and Santa Fe, and took note of how all working there were "cut off from the outside world," except for the last Sunday of each month. "The settlement [the Los Alamos complex]," he warned, "was full of FBI agents." Zarubin nevertheless pledged that they would take "further measures to plant our reliable sources in Los Alamos."

Colonel Chikov's second major revelation was that the KGB intended to use members of the American Communist Party for their espionage activities. The KGB official reveals for the first time the central role in establishing a U.S. atom bomb-related espionage network of Morris and Lona Cohen, two American Communists.

Who were the Cohens? Morris, a New York high school football star, fought with the Abraham Lincoln Brigade in Spain, where he was evidently recruited for espionage work. Their pictures were found in the safe of Colonel Rudolph Abel, at the time of the latter's 1957 arrest in New York. The photos were wrapped in $20 bills, with the names "Shirley" and "Morris" writ-

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ten on the back of their pictures.

The Cohens, however, were no longer in New York. They had, like so many others apparently involved with Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, disappeared from sight virtually overnight, the very time the Rosenbergs and their accomplices were arrested. Morris Cohen had been teaching fourth grade at P.S. 96 on New York's Upper East Side. One day he simply failed to turn up for work. He and Lona were never heard from again.

But their fingerprints led to the eventual discovery that the couple, having traveled around the world, were working in London in 1961—using the names Helen and Peter Kroger. British intelligence found their home to have shortwave equipment, microdot reading machinery, radio broadcasting schedules, and false passports. They had been associates of a Soviet control agent, "Gordon Lonsdale," whose real name was Konan Molody. Eventually all—following convictions on espionage charges—were included in a 1967 trade with the Russians in exchange for a British spy.

The Chikov article presents what amounts to a confession by the Cohens. It establishes, based on their own testimony (included in their personal files), that both were recruited from the ranks of the American Communist Party. Indeed, the KGB confirms that the NKVD recruited Cohen while he was serving in Spain. Chikov tells us that after being wounded in battle in 1938, Cohen was sent to a villa in Madrid that housed a Soviet-run intelligence unit of the Republican Army.

Excerpts from the Cohens' testimony indicate that Morris was proud of his calling. After marrying Lona on June 22, 1941, Morris recruited her for Soviet "secret work." In the KGB documents he quips, "Moscow had already decided on Lona and me fulfilling its assignments together. There is nothing like a good and reliable married couple." Noting her very first reaction—that he might be thought guilty of "high treason"—Morris Cohen says he responded that he was "upholding and fighting for universal truth and justice" when he went to work as a Soviet agent; this, by definition, "was not treachery at all."

The KGB also claims for the first time in this article that there was a "third man" involved in the atom bomb espionage. If Klaus Fuchs was the first to come to the Soviets' aid and Harry Gold was the second (delivering data obtained by David Greenglass, Julius Rosenberg's brother-in-law), then an agent described here as working with Cohen was the still unknown man. He was given the name "Arthur Fielding" by the KGB. His identity remains—for now—a mystery.

What, then, did the information gathered by Cohen mean to the Soviets? Of great significance is the final long report, issued on March 4, 1943, from Kurchatov to Pervukhin, deputy chairman of the Council of People's Commissars. The head of the Soviet nuclear program reported that the new intelligence material was "of tremendous, inestimable importance for our State and our science." The Cohens gave the Soviets the "guidelines for subsequent research," allowing them to "bypass many laborious phases involved in tackling the uranium problem."

The data told Moscow first how to engage in isotope separation—through "centrifuging"—which Kurchatov acknowledged "came as a surprise to our physicists and chemists." Second, the problem of "nuclear explosion and combustion" revealed how to mix uranium oxide and heavy water—an operation Soviet scientists had thought impossible. Third, the material received "gives much space to the physical process which was supposed to take place in the uranium bomb." In all, the data had caused Moscow to "revise our views on many problems" and adopt new lines of research, according to Kurchatov. Moreover, Soviet scientists were now sure that the problem could be solved much earlier than they had previously thought.

According to Professor David Holloway of Stanford University, who is researching the Soviet atomic project, this Kurchatov memo is most likely genuine and confirms what he has heard from Soviet physicists. Holloway notes that those working on the bomb project were always astounded as to how, at crucial junctures, Kurchatov had come up with new methods of research and new questions, and had consistently managed to steer them in the right direction.

In the memo, Kurchatov significantly mentions the mixture of uranium oxide with heavy water as an insight gained through spying. It has long been known that Arthur Adams, one of the first Soviet intelligence officers to work in the United States, visited Chicago in 1944, where he met one Clarence Hiskey, a University of Chicago scientist. A congressional investigation concluded that Hiskey had supplied Adams with secret information regarding atomic research. Hiskey had then tried to get one John H. Chapin, another scientist, also to meet with Adams and replace him. Hiskey's work was on the SAM version of gaseous diffusion, and on the heavy-water alternative to diffusion in the production of U-235. Hiskey and Chapin were never prosecuted, despite a congressional recommendation that indictments be drawn. Hiskey has long claimed that he was victim of a McCarthy era witch-hunt. The newly released Kurchatov memo, however, tends to indicate that he may well, in fact, have been the source for the data cited by Kurchatov.

Why is the KGB airing these secrets right now? Some will point to its need to insist on the centrality of its historic role as the guardian of the Soviet state, particularly as it seeks ammunition in the war against liberals, dissidents, and those influenced by Sakharov in the scientific community. Others will stress that this is far from the first time Soviet intelligence agencies have confirmed espionage activities, and will note that celebrating the Cohens hardly amounts to identifying a new source of information.

In the end, however, what is crucial is the simple fact that the KGB itself has decided to confirm the central

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role of espionage in developing the Soviet atom bomb; as well as the central role played by American Communists in carrying out the relevant espionage assignments. There are, of course, those who will always seek reasons to disbelieve even confessions from the KGB itself. But most readers will find this new article by Vladimir Chikov powerful support of what has long been apparent.

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AZERBAIJAN POSTCARD

PAJAMA GAME

By Conor O'Clery

AKHSIPARA, AZERBAIJAN

The land over which the people of Armenia and Azerbaijan have fought for centuries and for which they are now shedding blood again is rich, beautiful, and treacherous. The winding road to the village of Akhsipara, on the northern border between the two republics, runs through small valleys with poppy-strewn vineyards and sheep pastures. At this time of year the still, silent air is filled with rich farmyard smells mingled with the scent of roses, which cling to the verandas of the white-brick houses. It is also occasionally rent with the sound of explosions and automatic gunfire.

Akhsipara is an Azerbaijani village that was mortared several times in April and May by Armenian militants from the border a mile away. Some houses are wrecked, and children play in metal helmets. All up and down the 350-mile border the ethnic tension between the two Transcaucasian peoples has become sporadic warfare. Until recently the fighting was largely confined to the region of Nagorno-Karabakh in the southwest of Azerbaijan, a region populated primarily by Armenians who voted three years ago to join the Armenian republic. But now the war is far broader, and the Kremlin has taken sides.

The Soviet army has joined the Azerbaijanis. You see its role unmistakably in the Azerbaijani border village of Airu, near Akhsipara, where the road to Armenia is blocked with a fallen telegraph pole. The army has established a base at the village library. Soviet soldiers have packed the windows with sandbags, dug trenches, and pointed an artillery piece toward the Armenian hills. The village has been evacuated since last August because of constant incoming artillery fire. "It's a second Afghanistan here," said Senior Lieutenant Mikhail Kudreshov of Moscow, whose men, sporting the floppy beige hats worn by soldiers in Afghanistan, have manned the base for six months. Another soldier said, "Our relations with the Armenians used to be good. We would buy cigarettes from their fighters and sometimes do more serious trade." He laughed. "Three soldiers were once offered 250,000 rubles for their tank. But now we're fighting them."

President Mikhail Gorbachev's intervention on the side of Armenia's ancient enemy, which began four weeks ago, gives him an opportunity to punish the independence-minded republic of Armenia, whose 3.5 million population already suffers acute food and fuel shortages because of a partial economic blockade. Armenia incurred the Kremlin's wrath by refusing to sign a new union treaty and allowing armed militants to establish themselves in Nagorno-Karabakh.

The Armenians are now feeling the heat. A short walk across the sloping fields from Airu lies Vaskepar, an Armenian village attacked by Azerbaijani and Soviet Interior Ministry troops on May 6. Eleven Armenian policemen were shot dead that day by Soviet soldiers, and the small village now lies empty. "Three years ago the villagers used to be friendly with each other," said Fasil Aliev, an Azerbaijani stonecutter, as we walked through Airu. "We were like that"—he held his two forefingers together.

The offensive by the Soviet army alongside Azerbaijan is also a reward to the republic's Communist leader, Ayaz Mutalibov, for committing Azerbaijan to the "nine plus one" agreement on preserving the Soviet Union, signed by Gorbachev and the leaders of nine loyal republics in April. It helps restore popular backing for Communist power in Azerbaijan, where the army crushed a popular uprising in January 1990. In this backward republic, that means a return to Brezhnev-type conformity. Driving south through Azerbaijan I came across dozens of party slogans and statues of Lenin. Pictures of helicopters firing automatic and rocket fire at Armenian militants are now frequently shown on state-controlled Azerbaijani television to foster support for the Soviet army. The tactic seems to be working. Near the town of Agdam I came across tanks with roses, given by local people, in their gun barrels.

Agdam, a straggly, untidy Azerbaijani town of 50,000 noted for its port wine, is the military base for operations in Nagorno-Karabakh. The town bristles with guns wielded by men in different uniforms signifying the regular Soviet army, Soviet and Azerbaijani Interior Ministry troops, local militia, and militia volunteer groups composed of Azerbaijani youths in spotted green and white camouflage pajamas and sneakers, and armed with Kalashnikovs. It has the chaotic levantine atmosphere of a town in Lebanon, with comparable amounts of military hardware. Islamic slogans are written on the dashboards of Azerbaijani vehicles used in this war against Christian Armenia.

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Military operations in Agdam are supervised personally by the Azerbaijani interior minister, Asadov Marmed, who wears a military uniform and has an office in the headquarters in the Soviet army communications center. Backed by Soviet armed units, he launched an operation in mid-May to check the documents of the estimated 140,000 Armenians living in or near Nagorno-Karabakh. Armenians fear it is aimed at expelling those not officially authorized to live there. He has closed the region to foreign journalists, saying the situation is too dangerous. Shooting is continuous, and there are many *boyeviki*—armed Armenian militants—in the area. Recently they began attacking the pajama-clad militia on the city outskirts.

The real reason for the censorship, however, is more likely the critical accounts of the joint Soviet-Azerbaijani military action by Russian journalists such as Vladimir Yemelyanenko of *Moscow News*. In one report from the Armenian village of Getashen in Azerbaijan's Khanlar district, in which eighteen people (including seven Azerbaijani soldiers) were killed in a joint Soviet-Azerbaijani raid on April 30, he described how Soviet troops had torn up Armenians' passports and insisted on their immediate departure, and the policy had resulted "in carnage, not law enforcement."

The interior minister indignantly denied deporting Armenians from strategic villages, remarking delicately nevertheless that "it is not official policy but it is not excluded that there are people who will want to get rid of Armenian militants." In Baku, a six-hour ride through flat marshland from Agdam, President Mutalibov said in the eleven-story marble-clad Communist Party headquarters that he would guarantee civil rights for all people living within Azerbaijan's borders, but threatened to deport the population of villages where armed activities continued.

With his Mediterranean features and immaculately tailored suit, and his habit of gesticulating in Latin fashion, the light glinting off his heavy silver watch, Mutalibov could pass for a city boss in Naples, a city that Baku strongly resembles. He pointed out a frequent complaint heard in Azerbaijan, that the expulsions from both republics in the past three years, involving hundreds of thousands of people on both sides, had left no Azerbaijanis in Armenia but 200,000 Armenians still living within Azerbaijani borders. "They could live peacefully if they obeyed Azerbaijani rules," he said.

For now the target of the Soviet military operation appears to be the destruction of the Armenian armed units, in order to preserve the Kremlin's military monopoly within the USSR. With the Soviet army fighting on the Azerbaijani side there is nothing to stop the Azerbaijanis subduing the Armenian militants now, other than the limits the Kremlin itself puts on its military venture. But for the Kremlin there are risks as well. Gorbachev is riding the tiger of ethnic hatred, and it could turn on him. To control it he is unlikely to fulfill the strategic aims of Azerbaijan—the defeat of the Armenians and the subduing of Nagorno-Karabakh—as this would remove his leverage on the republic of 7 million people with its rich oil deposits in the Caspian Sea off Baku. Moreover, Azerbaijan's loyalty to Moscow is by no means secure. Local opposition leaders say that a state of emergency ban on demonstrations disguises latent discontent. They also claim that the result of the March 17 all-union referendum, which showed 93 percent support in Azerbaijan for staying in the Soviet Union in a 76 percent turnout, was a fix.

Only about 15 percent of Azerbaijani voters took part, said Tofik Gasymov, a theoretic physicist with flowing white hair and gold teeth, who leads a liberal faction of the pro-democracy popular front. (The front won forty-three of the 350 parliament seats last year. Local and foreign observers were not allowed to monitor either the elections or the referendum.) Moscow's support for their ancient ethnic grievance has not won the hearts of many Azerbaijanis. "Moscow doesn't want to resolve it. They use us as an instrument. They use the Armenians as an instrument," said Djavshir Zharchiev, a middle-aged worker with a dark mustache who leads the opposition popular front in the northern town of Gasakh. "It's a big game." Evidence of just how serious the game has become can be seen at Gyanja (formerly Kirovobad), the nearest air base to Nagorno-Karabakh. On the airport runway I saw thirty-five Soviet military helicopters. The last time I saw such a sight was in Afghanistan.

CONOR O'CLERY is Moscow correspondent for the *Irish Times*.

Communism's latest victims.

BOUNCED CZECHS

By David Franklin

PRAGUE

A sinister-sounding neologism has recently been floating around the offices and beer halls of Prague and other towns across Czechoslovakia. *Lustrace*, which has its roots in the Latin *lustrum*, meaning a purifying sacrifice, is the Czech word for the screening of former Interior Ministry files to find who collaborated with the Communist secret police, or StB. The files contain the names of more than 100,000 citizens who worked with the StB up to and even beyond the Velvet Revolution. Files were kept on a wide array of people, from full-time agents who provided their apartments as listening posts, to ordinary citizens who didn't even know they were being recruited. The records were

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used last June to keep proven informers off election ballots, and are now in the hands of a parliamentary commission.

Lustration (it sounds odd in Czech, too) has become a mania in this country. Factory workers, university students, and local government employees have all called for their institutions to be screened. This crusade cannot be dismissed as a witch-hunt; its impetus is the very real mistrust sown by the secret police here for forty years. Only in East Germany and the Soviet Union were the Communist secret police more active and pervasive than in Czechoslovakia. The StB's goal was to infiltrate every organization in society, from boys' clubs to religious communities. And they were in large part successful. Even Charter 77, the tight-knit dissident group co-founded by Václav Havel, was penetrated.

Yet the passion for lustration runs against one of the compelling themes of Czechoslovakia's fledgling political order. The Velvet Revolution began with an innocent battle cry: "We are not like them." The pariahs-turned-politicians, united under the smiley-face banner of Civic Forum, vowed not to create a new class of political outcasts as their predecessors had done. President Havel's 1990 New Year's speech started from the premise that "we are all, though naturally to various extents, responsible for the creation of the totalitarian machine." He went on to urge his countrymen to look forward, not back. Once in power, the new government instituted no criminal proceedings against Gustav Husák, Vasil Bilak, or the other leaders of the Communist regime. Only Miroslav Štepán, the local Party leader in Prague (and probable fall guy), was brought to trial, for allegedly masterminding the November violence.

Havel's view is attracting fewer followers as frustration with the slow pace of reform grows. Even the intelligentsia believes that the forgive-and-forget approach forfeits an opportunity to set moral standards. "It is possible to forgive something only after one articulates what that something was," writes Vojtěch Cepl, a law professor and government adviser. "If this view causes us to say nothing about the past, the price of [the Velvet Revolution] would be too high."

Moreover, according to most politicians here, lustration is not primarily a matter of retribution. The aim is to prevent legislators and other public figures from being influenced further by their former StB partners. Tomáš Kopřiva, a right-wing Civic Forum MP, told me the Communists could be identified by the measures they introduce into parliamentary bills to impede economic reform. "But collaborators are different. They have no sovereignty over themselves," he says. Czechoslovakia has bitter recent memories of political manipulation by previous regimes. As the Second World War ended, many Nazi collaborators found refuge within the Communist Party. When the Communists grabbed power in 1948, they also came into possession of Gestapo records. Many of the former Nazi informers, fearing exposure, became the most obedient servants of the new regime. For many who support lustration, the publicization of the names is the critical step in preventing further blackmail.

Lustrace faced its first major test this January, when the Czech minister for the environment, Bedřich Moldan, was exposed as a collaborator. All members of the Czech government had agreed to be screened, and Moldan's StB file showed him listed as a former "candidate" for StB recruitment. At first Moldan, a longtime dissident and one of the first to criticize the Communists for their ecological myopia, agreed to step down. Later he made an about-face, pointing out that he had never signed any agreement with the secret police. His protests notwithstanding, Moldan was fired by the Czech parliament presidium on January 24.

Also in January, the federal parliament passed a resolution mandating the screening of all its members by its in-house commission. Once the vettings were complete, proven collaborators were given fifteen days to resign quietly, or else their names would be exposed to the public. Those fifteen days expired on March 19—during which time four MPs stepped down—and the pronouncement of the names was scheduled for the coming Friday.

On that morning the mammoth, neo-Stalinist hall of the Federal Assembly in Prague, normally at least half empty, was packed with MPs, reporters, and guests. Millions more watched at home or at work on live television as Petr Toman, spokesman for the investigating commission, rose to speak, wearing an oversized white sports jacket that looked more like a lab coat than a mantle of purity. Toman described the methodology that the commission had followed in its lustrations: all evidence of collaboration had to be extensively cross-referenced, no one would be exposed unless it was clear that he had been aware of his status as an StB co-worker, and so on. Observers in the balcony—old ladies with plastic shopping bags, men in wide, tacky, old-regime ties—leaned forward, scribbling in notebooks, as Toman announced the names of the ten supposed informers-cum-MPs, together with their Interior Ministry file numbers, the dates of their recruitment and practice, and the names of their secret police superiors.

The real spectacle was yet to come. The hall fell silent as Toman took his seat and Rudolf Zukal, one of the fingered deputies, came to the podium. Rather than issuing a contrite confession, he said he never knew he was in the StB files, and that he never helped the Communists. On the contrary, he said, he had to drive a bulldozer in the '70s because he refused to disavow his opposition to the 1968 Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. And when he signed Charter 77, everything got worse. "I feel more irony today than shame," he concluded.

Next to speak was Petr Burian, another lustrated MP. He too mentioned the perils of having been a Charter 77 signatory. Visibly upset, he went on to describe some

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chance meetings in 1989 with a stranger in a pub who only revealed himself as a secret police agent after the revolution. Burian said he had tried to open his case publicly, but that he got no response from either the commission or the federal government. "My case should stand not only as a warning against the black-and-white vision, demagoguery, and hysteria of lustration," he ended, "but as proof that there is no rule of law in our newly born democracy."

But the lengthiest and most gripping defense was delivered by Jan Kavan, also of Civic Forum. In great detail he described his activities over a twenty-year period spent mostly in England, helping to circulate samizdat literature in the West and to smuggle Western books into Czechoslovakia. Kavan said he had offered twelve witnesses to the commission to testify to his integrity, but all of them had been turned down. Instead, he continued, the only testimony accepted against him was that of StB agents, trained liars. "After more than twenty years of total devotion to the opposition," he said, "at one stroke I have been placed alongside the people who imprisoned my father, destroyed my mother's health, and deprived me of a normal life." He told the parliament he could finally understand how Vlado Clementis and other naive Communists felt after 1948 when they were betrayed (and executed) by their own comrades.

Most observers here agree that the broadcast of the exposures backfired. The much-anticipated moment of truth in parliament had all the elements of a show trial. The mood in the Federal Assembly foyer after the morning session was one of shame and awkwardness; no one knew quite what to do with their hands. And according to a recent poll, 33 percent of Czechoslovak citizens said their confidence in parliament had declined as a direct result of the public lustrations.

They have ample reasons for their doubts. Despite the legendary precision of the old StB records, troubling ambiguities remain. Some files from Slovakia were destroyed or spirited away in early 1990. Others are inaccurate, reflecting Vietnam-body-count-style exaggerations by overzealous recruiters. Still others are incomplete. A member of parliament who has viewed the ten "positive" files told me that although each of them contained items in the handwriting of the lustrated MP, only two included his signature on a binding agreement to collaborate.

Yet many also believe that the parliamentary lustrations didn't go far enough. A recent cartoon in the leading newspaper *Lidové Noviny* makes the point succinctly. It shows one MP asking another why he seems so unafraid of lustration. "Why worry?" the other replies. "I was never recruited by the secret police. I was giving them orders." *Lustrace* has targeted those who acted in lockstep with the former Communist leadership, while leaving that leadership itself, not to mention full-time StB agents, untouched.

One option, supported by the leaders of most of the influential parliamentary "clubs" (something like American caucuses), is a resolution that formally declares the Communist regime to have been "illegitimate and worthy of condemnation," and likens it to a period of serfdom. Under such a resolution, the parliament would probably ask former high Party officials after 1968 to withdraw from public life for a period of time. The most prominent target would be Federal Prime Minister Marian Čalfa, a moderate Slovak lawyer who was a member of the Communist government just before the revolution. As with the exposed MPs, chances are that no retroactive criminal proceedings would be initiated against the former bosses.

Given the political climate here, Havel's New Year's message of amnesty and amnesia now sounds more than a bit quaint. This nation is caught between a deep need to distribute blame and a deep desire to reclaim the rule of law. The Czechoslovak revolution may still find a way to mete out justice without sacrificing the principles—or the people—that fostered it. But the parliamentary hootenanny clearly failed to strike this balance, offering instead an ominous taste of possible Jacobinism to come.

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Washington's black-Hispanic split.

OVER THE RAINBOW

By Charles Lane

When Daniel Enrique Gomez left tiny Chirilagua, El Salvador, for Washington two years ago, becoming a martyr was probably the furthest thing from his mind. Chirilagua, in southeastern El Salvador, is the kind of place you escape from if you can. It lies near one of the main routes that El Salvador's leftist rebels use to infiltrate supplies from Nicaragua. The surrounding area has seen war between the Salvadoran army and the guerrillas for eleven years; the local economy, based on cattle, fishing, and the once-crowded Pacific Ocean beaches nearby, is dying. Whole villages, Chirilagua among them, live off the money sent home by friends and relatives working in Washington, where the Salvadoran colony makes up the vast majority of the metropolitan area's 150,000 Latinos.

Gomez settled near Mount Pleasant, one of the city's few areas of real ethnic and class diversity, and went to work, like many other Salvadorans, in construction. On

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May 5 a rookie cop tried to arrest him for drinking in a park on the main drag of the neighborhood. Gomez, drunk, brandished his knife, and the threatened officer shot him, wounding him in the chest. False rumors spread that Gomez had been shot while handcuffed, and the worst riot in Washington since the black ghetto uprising of 1968 was under way. "They shot him because he was a Latino!" one youth cried at a neighborhood meeting amid the looting and burning.

The new twist on this classic scenario was that the cop was a black woman—and that a predominantly black city government and police force found themselves putting down a Hispanic eruption. It was certainly a blow to the fashionable notion that "people of color" are invariably united by their shared experience of oppression at the hands of whites. (Jesse Jackson, apostle of a multicultural "rainbow coalition," was received with indifference when he showed up in Mount Pleasant to urge calm and black-Hispanic unity to a crowd of young Latinos.) I spent three days in the area after the riot, and it was hard to ignore the anti-black rhetoric of young Spanish-speaking immigrants. A young Salvadoran, who would identify himself only as Jimmy, referred to the officer who shot Gomez as "*la morena*"—the black woman—as if no further description were necessary. A 26-year-old told me: "It's *bien delicado*—very touchy—to say so, but a white cop will treat you well. The black cop is merciless. The whites are a little more understanding. But blacks don't seem to understand."

The bad feeling, it seems, was mutual. The riot prompted a minor, but ugly, backlash from a few prominent blacks. D.C. City Council member H. R. Crawford said of the Latinos: "If they don't appreciate our country, get out." The Washington *Afro-American* ran an editorial cartoon depicting a Latino mob toppling a building onto an innocent-looking group of blacks. The audience for such demagogy was the seemingly large number of blacks who see Latinos as competitors for jobs, and, perhaps, governmental assistance. Of course, the black-Latino fault line in the American ethnic mosaic had already cracked open elsewhere—in New York, for example, where state NAACP president Hazel Dukes caused outrage among Latinos last year by charging that Spanish-speaking immigrants were taking low-wage jobs from blacks. With urban economies in decline and immigration levels at historic highs, some even saw the D.C. riots as a harbinger of future intraminority battles over urban turf.

That was the last distinction Washington's black Democratic politicians wanted for their city, which is still reeling from the legacy of Marion Barry's appalling 1990 drug trial. They seemed both amazed and genuinely pained by the ironic situation into which they had been thrust. Groping for a paradigm to make sense of the event, they fell back on an analysis shaped, on the one hand, by the lessons of past riots by blacks and, on the other hand, by "multiculturalist" views of contemporary ethnic differences. Thus Mayor Sharon Pratt Dixon tempered her condemnations of violence with solicitude for the "concerns" of the "community." She ordered riot police to act with restraint, named a commission on multiculturalism, and denounced the outburst by Crawford. She even bravely conceded the charges of black racism. "It's always amazing that every group that has been discriminated against [can do] the same thing towards someone else," she told *Newsweek*.

The mayor's earnestness was duly praised by all, but no one was really satisfied. Businesspeople, the police, and homeowners said she had been too soft, permitting avoidable damage to property—and the impression that rioting was just a form of protest. Dixon doesn't have the money for new programs to meet the demands of galvanized Latino organizations. Her thankless task, like the one that faced white mayors of riot-torn cities in the '60s, is to satisfy the leaders of the aggrieved minority (some of whom are already making ominous allusions to the long summer ahead) without alienating blacks, who are unsympathetic to the Latinos and have their own claims to the city's shrinking resources.

Few responsible voices publicly challenged the assumption of a direct connection between the rioting and the grievances—which, as framed by Latino leaders, included not only police brutality but also poor housing, unemployment, and a lack of Latinos in top city jobs. And to be sure, Washington's Latinos have seen more than their share of injustice and hardship, both before and after coming to America. The Salvadorans remember a horribly bloody civil war, which pushed nearly a million people out of their country in the last decade. Refused political asylum by the Reagan administration, most Salvadorans in the city remained undocumented, and hence easy to exploit; cheap, docile Salvadoran labor was a key ingredient in Washington's downtown hotel-office-retail boom. And the voteless Salvadorans didn't get any of the jobs and services dished out by Barry's political machine. In November 1990 an unchartered bank called Latin Saving and Investment, operated from a storefront near Mount Pleasant by a man from southeastern El Salvador, collapsed, wiping out $4.5 million worth of hard-earned savings for hundreds of Salvadoran families. Barry's government had been put on notice about the bank's shaky operations but did nothing. And I heard enough specific instances of petty hassling by police to believe that complaints about bigoted cops were more than mere paranoia.

Still, the Latino leaders' indictment of the city left some hard questions unanswered. It might well help matters, for example, if the city hires more Spanish-speaking cops, as it is now being urged to do. Yet there was a Spanish-speaking cop on the scene the night Gomez squared off with the police, and there was still a riot. Hundreds of black youths joined the looting the night after the initial Gomez shooting: What grievances did their actions express? And how *do* you meet legitimate needs in the wake of a riot with-

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out seeming to encourage more of the same?

In fact, neither Daniel Gomez, knife-wielder, nor the 1,000 or so rioters who rose to avenge him can be taken to represent all of Washington's Salvadorans. Daniel Gomez, striving construction worker, might. Most Salvadorans are poor but modestly upwardly mobile immigrants—not a permanent, aggrieved underclass. Whether or not they consciously sought absorption into the American mainstream when they left El Salvador, most eventually adopted that aspiration once they were here and cling to it through long hours of underappreciated toil. Take any Number 42 bus from downtown Washington to Mount Pleasant after 8 p.m. and you will see the office-cleaning crews coming home from work, many wearing good, trendy denim jeans, the latest sneakers, jewelry. And the majority now live in the less expensive sections of the Northern Virginia and Maryland suburbs; Mount Pleasant is for less-established new arrivals like Gomez.

Although they still suffer prejudice from both whites and blacks in their adopted country, and thus sympathize with charges of police brutality, Salvadorans are likely to view the riot as a disaster that threatens to compound unfair stereotypes and hence jeopardize hard-won immigrant gains. Some of the least sensitive comments I heard about the riot came from Salvadorans. "They're bums," a high school student told me. "The police should lock them up," said a local businessman.

Of all the ironies raised by the rioting in Washington, one of the more poignant was that until relatively recently relations between the police and Mount Pleasant's 15,000 residents had been improving. Street crime was on the wane. So were public drinking, loitering, and rowdy behavior. The reason, residents say, was a pilot "community policing" program under the supervision of a veteran officer named Bonnie O'Neal. (Bonnie, as she is universally known on the streets, has a colorful past: after a long career on the force as a man, she left following a gender-change operation, then re-enlisted fourteen months later as a woman.)

Instead of just responding to complaints phoned in to 911, as big-city police usually do, O'Neal and other trained officers kept up a steady, visible presence on the beat. Neighbors were urged to set up watch committees and other grass-roots organizations through which they could make their needs known to O'Neal. Drug dealers, drunks, and prostitutes soon learned that they faced cops who knew their turf as well as they did.

The essence of O'Neal's style was to remind residents of what they owed to society as well as what they had a right to expect. After Gomez was shot, a mini-polemic developed in the city over whether it was reasonable to expect Salvadorans to stop their public drinking. Loi-

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tering crowds and broken bottles are a major nuisance to residents and businesses on Mount Pleasant Street. But, some said, drinking on the street is a normal thing in warm-weather Latin cultures. O'Neal learned a smattering of Spanish and always used the respectful *usted* when addressing Salvadorans, but would have had little patience for such arguments. Many a drinker found himself gaping up at the tall, burly cop, listening to a lecture on the loitering law and watching his booze splash on the pavement. "I tried to educate people that no matter if they were homeless or jobless, they have a responsibility to the community," she told me. Latinos were no less pleased with the "tough love" approach of O'Neal (who is white) than were white and black homeowners and business people. "She knew how to deal with people," says Pedro Aviles, who works with Latino youth in the area and now heads the D.C. Latino Civil Rights Task Force. "With sensitivity but at the same time with forcefulness."

O'Neal's service in Mount Pleasant ended abruptly in July 1990, when she documented to her superiors the tens of thousands of dollars' worth of overtime she had put in running the program. She says she only intended to illustrate the true costs of a successful community policing program, but the police department immediately reassigned her. She retired instead; the neighborhood threw her a huge farewell party in Mount Pleasant's African Room restaurant. After she left, crime and relations between residents and the police worsened; broken beer bottles now litter the streets.

It isn't clear whether multiculturalism was just the first catch phrase that came to Mayor Dixon's mind in a crisis or whether it represented her emerging conception of how to deal with Washington's increasingly complex ethnic mix. Either way, an effort to deal with people on a group-by-group basis will probably raise more frustrations than it resolves, especially if it means adjusting basic standards of civility in the name of "sensitivity." A final irony raised by D.C.'s unusual riot is that expressions of liberal guilt are no surer guide through the thicket of race when they come from black officials rather than whites. For all its clear communal overtones, the violence in Mount Pleasant began at the individual level, with a working man who got out of hand when he was drunk, and a rookie cop who, with more experience and better training, might not have let things escalate to the point of necessary self-defense. Bonnie O'Neal showed that government can prevent such problems when it treats people as individuals who have responsibilities as well as rights—not just as victimized representatives of "cultures." In a city where rampant murder and drug-dealing in black ghettos, as well as ethnic tensions among blacks, whites, and Latinos, tear at the fabric of civility, that idea might have practical applications well beyond the boundaries of Mount Pleasant.

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The plight of Hispanic immigrants.

LATIN MASS

By Peter Skerry and Michael Hartman

The usually thoughtful *Washington Post* columnist William Raspberry wrote of the recent Hispanic outburst in Washington, D.C.: "It could get to be a good deal more like the '60s before it's over—and not just in Washington . . . the parallels between the Latino communities and riot-torn black communities of the '60s are striking."

But are they? Aside from the fact that Hispanics generally face nothing like the barriers that once impeded blacks, this interpretation ignores the unique situation of Hispanics in D.C. First, their numbers are small, despite their rapid growth over the last decade. In 1980 the Census found a mere 17,679 in the city; during the 1980s the Hispanic population increased an estimated 85 percent. The 1990 Census reports there were 32,710 Hispanics in D.C. proper. Still, of the total population of the national capital area, Hispanics constitute at most 7 percent—compared with the city of Los Angeles, where they number 40 percent; New York, 24 percent; or Miami, 62 percent.

The other salient characteristic of Hispanics in Washington is their relative affluence. The 1980 Census (1990 data are not yet available) reported that the median family income for Hispanics in metropolitan Washington was $22,216—compared with $16,359 in Miami and $15,541 in Los Angeles. And the proportion of Washington-area Hispanics living below the poverty line in 1980 was just under 11 percent—compared with 17 percent in Miami, 21 percent in LA, and more than 39 percent in New York.

Since 1980 a sizable influx of impoverished Central Americans means the situation of Washington Hispanics has in the aggregate deteriorated. Yet throughout the 1980s Hispanic business continued to prosper, fueled in part by contracts from the nearby federal behemoth as well as by substantial resources from Hispanic professionals and well-heeled diplomats. In 1988, for instance, *The Washington Post* reported that the Hispanic business start-up rate in Washington was triple that in New York, and almost double that in Los Angeles. The number of businesses per 1,000 local Hispanic residents in Washington was third in the nation.

Reflecting this affluence is the geographic dispersion of Washington Hispanics. The 1990 Census reports that only 19 percent of Hispanics in the metropolitan area actually lived in the District—a fact worth pointing out, since Mount Pleasant is described repeatedly as a "His-

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panic neighborhood." Yet as of 1990 Mount Pleasant was just 27 percent Hispanic (up 130 percent from 1980); 35 percent non-Hispanic white (up 16 percent); and 35 percent black (down 20 percent).

Another critical difference between Washington and other cities is the diversity of Hispanics in D.C. In metropolitan LA, about 80 percent of the Hispanics are of Mexican origin. In Miami, Cubans account for about 70 percent. In New York and Philadelphia, Puerto Ricans constitute about 60 and 68 percent, respectively. In Chicago, 64 percent of Hispanics are of Mexican origin. In Washington, however, none of these three subgroups comes close to outnumbering the others. Indeed, the largest category of Hispanics in D.C. is what the Census calls "other Hispanics," more than 66 percent in 1980, and higher today. Among these, the largest group is undoubtedly Salvadorans, but there are many others. In the city's annual Hispanic Festival, at least twenty-four nationalities are represented; and in metropolitan Washington there are no fewer than seventeen Hispanic newspapers.

This growth, affluence, and diversity, however, have not translated into political clout. In the entire District of Columbia, there are barely 3,000 Hispanics registered to vote—little more than 1 percent of the city's total electorate. Not surprising, there is not one Hispanic elected official in the District. Among the 323 people elected to neighborhood advisory commissions across the city, only two are Hispanic. No wonder Mayor Sharon Pratt Dixon felt she could get away with cutting the budget of the D.C. Office of Latino Affairs by more than 40 percent (at least before recent events).

Some of this political impotence can be explained by the obstacles facing Hispanics in all American cities: ineligibility to vote due to non-citizenship or illegal status (an estimated half of the Hispanics in D.C. are undocumented); transience and lack of community ties among newcomers; the preoccupation of recent immigrants and refugees with returning to their homeland, or surviving economically. But the unique obstacle confronting Washington Hispanics is their diversity, which has fragmented efforts at political organization and stymied the emergence of effective leadership. The problem has emerged clearly in the Hispanic Festival, where Hispanic political energies, otherwise starved for outlets, have often played out. In recent years festival leadership contests have been marked by bickering among different Hispanic subgroups. One such dispute—between a Panamanian building contractor, a Spanish newspaper publisher, and a Puerto Rican radio station owner—got so bad that the League of Women Voters was brought in to supervise the annual elections.

Until quite recently the beneficiaries of this friction were Puerto Ricans from New York, who, as citizens and Anglophones, have the skills to manipulate the system—and represented some sort of leadership. Into this mélange arrived the Salvadorans, the group that, by all accounts, has contributed most to the recent growth. Fleeing an impoverished, war-torn homeland, Salvadorans are not only the most recent arrivals but also the poorest, the most disoriented, and the most frequently illegal. In Mount Pleasant, Salvadoran families double up in small apartments and turn hallways into extended family enclaves. Although recently afforded temporary relief from their illegal status by a Supreme Court decision and congressional action, Salvadorans remain in a legal limbo, now made worse by economic recession. Such factors may well have contributed to the actions on May 5 of Daniel Gomez, the Salvadoran who was shot by a black female police officer when he reportedly lunged at her with a knife. Hard times (perhaps juxtaposed with the affluence of other Hispanics) undoubtedly contributed to the behavior of Hispanics who then rioted.

Yet by itself this large and troubled Salvadoran presence hardly makes Washington unique. Los Angeles has an even larger such population. But LA has neither D.C.'s extreme diversity of Hispanic subgroups nor its combination of affluence and political impotence. For all their problems, the Salvadoran and other Central American immigrants in LA enjoy some semblance of political representation as part of a huge Hispanic community that is gaining increasing attention for itself.

Together, these facts make the Mount Pleasant riot a poor indicator of what will happen elsewhere. Whatever Hispanic leaders claim, such eruptions will likely occur not among Hispanics but among blacks. (Indeed, it is worth noting that most of those arrested in Mount Pleasant were black.) For even in cities where they hold significant political power, blacks already feel crowded out and overtaken economically by Hispanic (and of course Asian) immigrants. Now, as redistricting approaches, black political gains will also be threatened in cities where the steadily increasing and substantial number of Hispanics threatens to turn the logic of quotas against black populations shrinking in relative size.

The real lesson of Mount Pleasant, therefore, is not essentially one of racial discrimination against Hispanics, but of the trials and troubles of immigration: first of all, the problem of large illegal immigrant populations without the vote. Gerrymandering large Hispanic districts is no solution: without higher levels of Hispanic voting, these districts will still fail to represent the legitimate interests of many new immigrants. These populations also face severe economic challenges, but the problem remains of how to respond to them without further alienating poor blacks. Will not solutions, whether social programs or racial gerrymanders, necessarily be at the expense of black Americans, whose claims antedate the arrival of the vast majority of Hispanics?

In part we have not faced these questions because there has been a conspiracy of silence among liberals and conservatives on the subject of immigration. On the one hand, free-market enthusiasts and their neoconservative allies have refused to acknowledge any problems created by record levels of immigration. On the other hand, liberals have been eager to identify problems, but trace them to racism, not to immigra-

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tion. Hoping to win Hispanics as political allies, liberals depict them not as immigrants but as oppressed racial minorities in need of social programs and affirmative action. As Edward Albee has quipped, both have something to gain from immigration: conservatives their cheap labor, and liberals their cheap causes. The genuine successes and equally genuine needs of our newest Americans are often ignored in the process.

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L.A. liberals meet the police chief.

GATESGATE

By Harold Meyerson

LOS ANGELES

It's hard to explain to people outside Los Angeles why the city government has been unable and unwilling to take charge of its police in the wake of the Rodney King beating, and why Daryl Gates is still chief here. By the usual American standards LA is a liberal city: home to a relatively rancor-free multiculturalism unknown on the East Coast, routinely supporting Democratic presidential candidates, and electing Tom Bradley mayor five times though the city has never been more than one-fifth black.

The LAPD, by contrast, seems a throwback to Birmingham or Selma. As long ago as 1961 Theodore White called it "the most cruel in the nation." Since then LA has gone from a majority white to a majority black-Latino-Asian city, which has made the largely white force only more aggressive. Violence in black neighborhoods soared in the mid-'80s as gangs proliferated. Initially backed by many terrified black residents, the police started a series of gang sweeps, arresting tens of thousands of young men and filing charges against no more than several hundred. Nor was the crackdown confined to gangs or the ghetto. In the past two years the cops have pulled over and arrested, among others, basketball star-businessman Jamaal Wilkes (for driving an auto whose registration "was about to expire") and Wesley Snipes of *New Jack City*. Joe Morgan, a member of the baseball Hall of Fame, was wrestled to the floor of the LA airport. In none of these cases were charges even alleged. To be black and male in Los Angeles is in itself grounds for arrest.

Daryl Gates, far from holding back his rogue cops, has egged them on. During his thirteen years as chief, he has called blacks physiologically different from "normal people," Latinos "lazy," and Salvadorans "drunks." Gates told a congressional committee last year that "casual drug users ought to be taken out and shot." He once emerged from a police brutality lawsuit noting that the plaintiff had been lucky to get off with a broken nose. Yet more than two months after the King beating was aired, after calls for his resignation not only from liberals around the country but also from George Will (his favorite columnist), Gates remains chief of police. And he has many LA liberals to thank for it.

At one level, it's LA law that protects Gates. The Los Angeles City Charter, the handiwork of 1920s farm-belt expatriates who feared any trace of big-city (i.e., Catholic and Jewish) politics, insulates department heads generally, and the police chief in particular, from political oversight. The chief is answerable only to an appointed Police Commission that has no staff or budget of its own, and he is granted an additional level of civil service protection. "Why should I want to be mayor?" William Parker, founder of the modern LAPD, once asked. "I have more power than he does."

A majority of LA residents favored the Police Commission's 60-day suspension of Gates—by a 58 percent to 38 percent margin in a *Los Angeles Times* poll—and a plurality favored his firing. But when the Commission (stacked with new Bradley appointees who, bucking a long-standing tradition, actually sought to control the department) moved to suspend Gates on April 4, the City Council roused itself from a deep sleep—it has steadfastly refused to summon Gates to discuss the King beating—and all but suspended the Commission the following day. One day of civilian oversight of the department seemed about all the Council could stand: by a 10-3 vote, it settled a lawsuit Gates was bringing against the city, effectively reinstating him.

By any measure, only four or five of the Council's current thirteen members (there are two vacancies) are conservative. Among the liberal members who elected to remain silent or restore Gates were a one-time guiding light of New Left inner-city organizing; a champion of gay rights; a Latino long identified with civil rights; and an erstwhile Soviet Jewry crusader on whom the LAPD's political intelligence division had snooped and who a decade ago led the successful fight to abolish that division.

There were some clear political reasons for the silence of the Council liberals. Six members were standing for re-election this spring, all of them endorsed by the Police Protective League, which quietly informed the Council that a vote against Gates would be grounds for withdrawal of their endorsements. And the Council is engaged in a turf battle with Mayor Bradley, who has led the fight to oust the chief. Some members have been more eager to impede the mayor than to quell a rogue police force.

There's also been much undocumented speculation that the LAPD has files on the drug-related and sexual

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misconduct of at least three Council members, and on the eve of the Council's vote, Gates chose the discreet forum of Ted Koppel's "Nightline" to declare: "If I really laid it on the line—and I think the people of this city know me well—when I do, watch out!" It's little hints like this that can trouble a councilman's sleep. During Gates's one Council appearance in the past two months—to discuss matters other than Rodney King—he also dropped a veiled threat to reduce police services in the districts of any Council members who dared oppose him.

Whatever the reasons, it is Gates who controls the Council, not the other way around. His phone calls to members prompted them to reverse their stance toward the Police Commission, and he has recently delivered an unprecedented endorsement of one pro-Gates member fighting for re-election in the city's most conservative district.

The key miscalculation in the LAPD affair came from the mayor's office. Early on the administration seemed to know what was politically required to remove the chief. "We've got the ACLU and the black community, the chief's historic enemies," one Bradley confidant told me in March. "They're no big deal." The conservative Anglo enclaves of the San Fernando Valley were, as always, beyond reach. The swing constituencies that would sway the Council, Bradley's people confided, were LA's business leadership and its Jewish community. But when Bradley moved against the chief in early April, neither group moved—nor have they since.

The hope that business would come aboard was wildly optimistic. It rallied to Bradley only after his first election, and then because of his pro-growth stance, not his social liberalism. Corporate leaders have been quiet on the Gates question, and the chamber-of-commerce types have been supportive of the chief. (The unkindest cuts came when Richard Riordan, a Bradley commissioner and mega-real estate wheeler-dealer, and Chamber of Commerce president—and Bradley's former deputy mayor—Ray Remy spoke out on Gates's behalf.) Of course, the Rodney King video looked terrible for civic boosters—but the cops' harassment of blacks, however distasteful, keeps the underclass locked into the ghetto. Many businessmen view it as one of life's crueler but necessary trade-offs.

The Jewish population, by contrast, has been a flickering force for social liberalism. Jewish electoral support, with the votes of largely black South-Central LA, has always been key to Bradley's electoral success. "The Jewish community is 60-40 against Gates," the director of one of LA's establishment Jewish groups told me. "But I don't see an outpouring of people in the Jewish community yelling and screaming about him." Indeed, the city's center-left Jewish weekly, *The Jewish Journal*, has received only one letter about the LAPD controversy.

A number of Jewish political leaders have called for Gates's resignation, including Representatives Anthony Beilenson, Howard Berman, and Henry Waxman. But none of their counterparts in the city government has joined them. Of the various Jewish organizations, only the American Jewish Congress has called for Gates to resign. The Anti-Defamation League, rightly quick to jump on Jesse Jackson's verbal bigotries, has never gotten around to condemning any of Gates's. "I'm not convinced there's a pattern of insensitivity in the department that can be laid at Gates's doorstep," regional director David Lehrer says.

For most LA Jews, fear may be less of a factor than indifference: LA's hypersegregation and absence of a pedestrian culture render inner-city black LA a very distant world. And LA has not been immune to the national tensions in black-Jewish relations.

Politics having failed them, Gates's critics have pinned their hopes on two extrapolitical proceedings. But a lawsuit pitting the Police Commission against the Council was resolved in favor of the Council—effectively undermining LA's commission system and replacing it with the moral midgetocracy of Council rule. That leaves a blue-ribbon commission, headed by former Undersecretary of State Warren Christopher, charged with delivering a report in early July on the LAPD and its unaccountability. The Christopher Commission members were picked by the mayor's office with an eye to swaying business and community relations organizations as well as the Council. But one City Hall insider fears it could take a smoking gun—say, a signed directive from Gates himself ordering a pogrom—to get the Council to vote to oust him or change the department. And LA voters, who must approve any changes in the city charter, have resisted the recommendations of blue-ribbon commissions before.

As the LAPD controversy drags on, Gates's critics remain mostly black. A friend who poked his head inside the speakers' trailer at the city's largest anti-Gates rally to date saw most of the region's black elected officials, and only one non-black face: Councilman Michael Woo, Gates's sole City Council critic. "The topic under discussion," says the friend, "was, 'Where are our allies?' " That discussion remains remarkably free from recriminations. Indeed, the politics of black LA remain anything but separatist. Al Sharpton, who came to town to roil the waters, was universally shunned. And the recent killing of a black girl by a Korean shopkeeper has led to dialogue rather than ethnic strife.

But if the Rodney King crisis doesn't lead to true civilian control over the police, if Daryl Gates is allowed to remain in office, the days of Los Angeles exceptionalism are numbered. Among major American cities, LA leads a semi-charmed life—its race relations less poisoned, its ambience less tense, than those of its Eastern counterparts. By declining to join the struggle against a double standard in law enforcement, LA liberals ensure an outcome they cannot possibly desire: the transformation of their laid-back metropolis into an uptight, polarized Chicago or New York.

HAROLD MEYERSON is executive editor of *LA Weekly* and a member of the *Dissent* editorial board.

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CLAIBORNE PELL'S TWILIGHT ZONE

By Sidney Blumenthal

"I always let the other fellow have my way," says Claiborne Pell, the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the most aristocratic member of the most exclusive club in the country. His motto implies a whole worldview: the benign condescension of the well-born who doesn't care about claiming the credit so long as the less gentlemanly are doing his bidding. Pell would like his blitheness to be taken as more than the mark of one above the vulgar crowd; it should presumably be seen as the mask of a wily political practitioner.

Unfortunately, this projection impresses none of Pell's Democratic colleagues. "Pell's not inclined to be confrontational," says one senator. "It's a matter of doctrine with him, almost as if he were Gandhian." The abuse of power in this case lies in its abdication. Almost every day the committee's standing wanes further. Senators grab issues for themselves, and Pell doesn't express the remotest concern.

From the beginning, the Foreign Relations Committee has been the principal forum for Congress to deal with U.S. foreign policy. (The House Foreign Affairs Committee is not constitutionally vested with its sweeping powers, such as passing treaties; nor can it match its prestige.) In the end, the committee's strength is inescapably dependent upon its chairman. Under the imperious, skeptical J. William Fulbright, its authority was decisive in framing a national debate on the Vietnam War, and the fundamental tenets of foreign policy were subjected to searching scrutiny.

Since Fulbright's defeat in 1974, however, the committee has not had a strong Democratic chairman. The wavering, unfocused quality of the Democrats' thinking on foreign policy greatly reflects the effective loss of this concentrating instrument. Under Pell, the recognition of his incapacity has been registered in the dispersement of most of the committee's functions to its subcommittees—a virtual dismemberment. Never has its reputation been lower. "It's the doormat committee for foreign policy," says a source who has been close to the chairman. The committee has become a void with a kindly human face crossed by befuddlement.

In an age of calculated images, Claiborne Pell is the real thing. At 73 he sets out on his morning jog attired as the old Princeton clubman, his father's belt (a treasured possession) wrapped twice around his waist, the cuffs of his baggy trousers rolled up, his well-worn tweed sport coat buttoned. He is the scion of one of the most ancient families in New York state, landed gentry long before the Revolution. The grounds of Pelham manor encompassed much of what is today the Bronx and Westchester counties. Over the centuries the wealth of the Pells has not dissipated; the heirs assiduously married money. Claiborne's father, Herbert Pell, his exemplar, was an aristocratic liberal, elected a Democratic representative from Manhattan's silk-stocking district, who saw himself as a protector of the working class against a rapacious business class that had no sense of the public trust. During the 1920s, a time of Republican dominance, he became the chairman of the state party. (In his Senate hideaway Pell points out a photograph on his wall depicting his father seated between the two titans of the Empire State Democracy, Al Smith and Franklin D. Roosevelt. It is where the senator would like to be positioned himself, between the greatest working-class ethnic and the greatest liberal aristocrat.) Herbert Pell disdained the low calling of business. During the Depression, when a favorite niece told Uncle Bertie that her new husband had just gotten a job, he replied, "Oh, my dear, I'm so sorry." He himself joined the Foreign Service, appointed as the U.S. minister to Portugal and then Hungary.

Wherever his assignment, the family summered in Newport. Claiborne was "a summer boy who stayed on," says Nelson Aldrich Jr., of the patrician Rhode Island family and author of *Old Money*. He recalls his mother remarking that even as a boy Claiborne was referred to by his peers as "Stillborn."

Rhode Island is the most Catholic state in the nation, whose voters like to elect Protestant patricians with an air of noblesse oblige and incorruptibility. The true founder of the state's modern Democratic Party was a wealthy attorney, Theodore Green, who served first as governor and then as senator, rising to become chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee. Over 90 and slipping, he was pressured to step aside as chairman by the Senate majority leader, Lyndon Johnson, in favor of Fulbright. Green took the hint and retired. His seat was filled in 1960 by a Brahmin who had initially followed his father's footsteps in the Foreign Service: Claiborne Pell.

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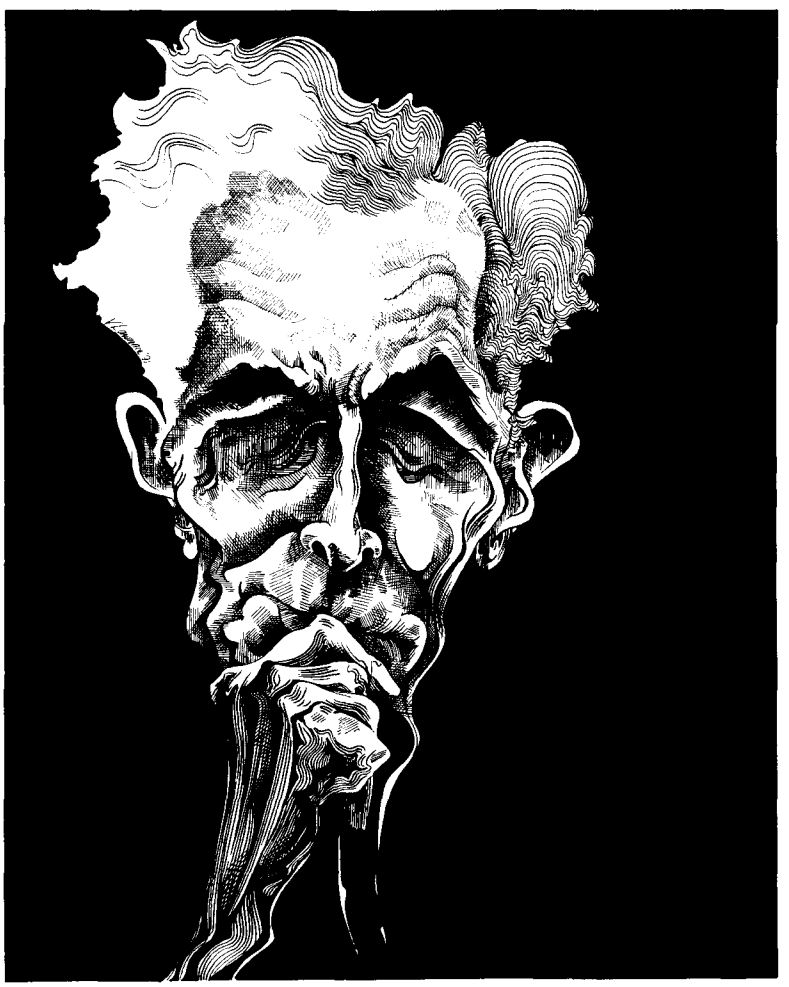
Pell is, as a committee staffer put it, "extremely nice"—unfailingly decent and considerate. His accomplishments have been in the realm of trusteeship: sponsoring the legislation establishing the National Endowments for the Arts and Humanities, the Pell Grants for low-income students, a treaty banning nuclear weapons on the ocean floor. He was an opponent of the Vietnam War but did not emerge as an important voice. Arms control became his ultimate cause, but he has never bothered to acquaint himself with the details. He assumes that good intentions and manners suffice.

For his other consuming interests, this is quite enough. On his trips to Geneva to oversee progress in whatever the latest arms talks are, he often slips out to Liechtenstein to visit its royal family. Over the years he has befriended much of the minor royalty of Europe. He has also avidly pursued his belief in the powers of extrasensory perception. Pell has even conferred on world peace with Uri Geller, noted for bending spoons with mental rays. Until this year the senator retained a staffer whose work was solely devoted to explorations in ESP. Pell himself is on the advisory board of the International Association of Near-Death Studies, a group fascinated with flat-liners. His aspiration to the spectral makes him seem like a ghost looking for a corporeal form to inhabit. "Some people have sensitivity—I don't have any," says Pell, "but if they do have these sensitivities, and they can be developed and increased in a human being, I think it's very important. It can have a profound impact on the well-being of human beings."



CLAIBORNE PELL BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

In the mid-1980s Pell was perfectly cast as the ranking minority member on the Foreign Relations Committee, the accommodating foil. For two years the chairman, Richard Lugar, reminded the Senate and White House of the committee's potential influence, as he pushed to deny U.S. support for Philippine dictator Ferdinand Marcos and argued for sanctions against South Africa. Then, in 1986, the Republicans lost the Senate, and Pell was thrust into the chair.

With his assumption of real power, his nightmare began. He became the image of the upper-class WASP as wimp that strikes terror in the heart of George Bush. Pell's colleagues, like a wolf pack, immediately scented his weakness. According to one senator, Sam Nunn, chairman of the Armed Services Committee, took a crash self-study course in foreign policy to fill the space that Pell would leave vacant by his presence.

In Congress, control of jurisdiction is the sine qua non of power. A member without turf is like a landless peasant. But Pell steadfastly refused to fight for th[illegible] which is his, and his rapid diminishment began at once. His position as chairman made it necessary for the congressional leadership to create a select committee to investigate the Iran-contra scandal, and it was handled with memorable incompetence. But the irrelevance of the Foreign Relations Committee was really settled in the debate over the reinterpretation of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, which the Reagan administration was attempting to trash. If it had succeeded, there would have been no Intermediate Nuclear Force Treaty; the cold war would have ended with the United States a passive bystander. Pell, when implored by arms control advocates to defend the ABM Treaty, dilly-dallied. Senators Nunn and Joe Biden rushed in. The treaty was saved, but Pell's influence was slashed.

When the INF Treaty came before the Senate, Pell appeared feckless once more. In the first days of the floor debate he lost control to Senator Jesse Helms a[illegible] needed Republican support to regain control. More than anyone else, Pell has empowered the infernal Helms, now the ranking minority member. It has been a triumph of the yahoo over the clubman. Helms, abusing the courtesies that Pell blithely accords him, is free to block the committee's business almost at will and with impunity; he need never fear retribution from the chairman. "We have a good personal relationship," says Pell, deeply bowing to the man who picks his pocket of the ancestral watch.

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As his re-election campaign in 1990 approached, Pell wavered about running again. He was disdained by the Democrats, exploited by the Republicans, and dismissed by the media. "His preference would be to do almost anything else than what he's doing," says a source who has been close to him, about Pell's chairmanship. "He enjoys being in the Senate but finds this dreadfully uncomfortable." But the leadership, always worried about losing the Senate majority, prevailed upon him to run.

During the campaign, Pell's aide assigned to ESP issues wrote Defense Secretary Richard Cheney saying that he had been playing tapes of Cheney's, Baker's, and Bush's speeches in reverse and could clearly hear the word "simone"—"a code word that would not be in the national interest to be known." When the letter was leaked to the press, Pell conceded that the "simone" issue "certainly isn't helpful." In the debate with his opponent, the popular Representative Claudine Schneider, he was asked what he had done for Rhode Island. "I couldn't give you a specific answer," he replied. "My memory's not as good as it should be." This doddering statement seemed to endear him even more to the adoring electorate. Schneider was urged by her handlers to attack his eccentricities. But as it turned out, she too was a believer in telekinesis and other paranormal phenomena. No graduate of the Lee Atwater Extension School, her most memorable line in the race was: "We all love Claiborne Pell." Pell won by almost two-to-one.

He returned to Washington to face the Gulf crisis. But Pell found it impossible even to exploit those rare occasions on which he displayed prescience. It was Pell who had first proposed sanctions against Iraq in 1988—a gesture rebuked by the Reagan and Bush administrations. After Saddam invaded Kuwait, Secretary of State James Baker was summoned before the committee. As Senator Paul Sarbanes was subjecting him to tough questioning, Pell, a stickler for equal minutes, was about to declare his time up. But some staffers moved the clock back and the interrogation went on. In spite of Pell's prophetic stand, his power was usurped. To handle the president's request for war authorization, Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell formed a special committee that superseded Foreign Relations. Never before, except in the case of Pearl Harbor, had the committee been bypassed in a matter of war. But Pell uttered not a word of protest. "I would have preferred that we have first crack at it," he says, "but I didn't make any issue of it."

A few weeks after the war's end, the committee at last sought out April Glaspie, the former U.S. ambassador to Iraq, who had told Saddam that the United States would have "no opinion" on his dispute with Kuwait. Helms demanded all the relevant State Department documents for review before Glaspie was questioned. The State Department refused, and Pell caved. At an informal hearing he gently deferred to Glaspie's defense that she had been quoted out of context. The inquiry was no inquiry at all, and the committee is still awaiting the release of the documents.

Pell, in fact, finds it difficult to criticize George Bush's foreign policy. He has discovered that it is mainly the technical distinction of party identification that divides him from the patrician in the White House. "I've come to respect Bush very much, and I didn't agree with going to war at the time. . . . Answering your question: I don't want to let down my party, and I'm a very strong Democrat." Pell served decades ago in the Senate with George's father, Prescott, the thought of whom inspires Pell to nostalgic rumination. "I felt very sympathetic with him. A very decent person. The son is much more of an activist. The father was a more quiet activist. And the mother, she was terrific. The father was senior prefect in the school I went to in Rhode Island. Very able."

The committee now has distributed nearly all of its duties and staff to its subcommittees and their chairmen. Pell has essentially eliminated himself from responsibility for handling nominations, the State Department budget, foreign aid, and regional issues; he doesn't have to produce mark-up documents, hold hearings, or defend bills on the floor. He has staged a coup against himself, hardly resolving the committee's absence of leadership. "If I think I had to do the whole myself as I had to before, I would not have run," Pell says.

Pell's staff justifies the dispersal of duties to the subcommittees by saying it will box in Helms. Yet it is producing a contrary effect. When the plan was first announced, the Republican senators on the committee attempted a revolt against Helms. But he cunningly bought off key members with subcommittee assignments and funds for staff. As the Democrats decentralized, the Republicans centralized. Now all mark-ups and amendments on the GOP side must pass through Helms's staff. His chokehold on the committee has been tightened.

Thus the emasculation of the committee will be drawn out until Pell retires after the 1996 election. Pell, certainly, will not be relieved of his ordeal as Theodore Green was by Lyndon Johnson. "I think the committee has been effective," says Mitchell. "I think the chairman has done a good job." But a voice thunders in the distance. "I don't care for what's going on. The whole government is not very effective," says Fulbright, the lion in winter. He is appalled that the committee did not oversee the war authorization resolution. "It's one of the committee's main purposes. The Foreign Relations Committee is supposed to be aware of that. The chairman, maybe he's intimidated. They seem to be intimidated, the leaders in Congress. They don't have much influence and don't say much. Well," he says, "I don't like to criticize people who I suppose are operating under difficult circumstances. I feel quite superfluous."

"I've been miserable in it," Pell admits about his years as chairman. "When I first came here," he recalls wistfully, "I used to wander onto the floor in the afternoon, and you could chat and listen. Now there's not quite as much fun." He seems to betray a wish that he had lost last year's election so that he could have spent his time on ESP and near-death studies. "I would have devoted a good deal of my energy to it," Pell says. "As of now, I can't. This is a full-time job—too full-time." ●

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Naked Truths

The late John Cassavetes—writer, director, actor—is a problem in American film history. As an actor, in his own pictures and in others, he has unique fire. His portrayal of a desperate, feverishly charming paranoiac in Elaine May's *Mikey and Nicky* (1976) gives life to the crinkled tenets of Method acting. But Cassavetes's own films are troubling.

Clearly they are attempts to cut new roads, heterodox and free, using the "noodling" of hyper-realistic detail to open large territories of dread and pain. But they never quite realize their aim. A valiant attempt has just been made in New York to fix Cassavetes's place in the film firmament, a retrospective of his work, featuring a film that had never had a theatrical release. But **Opening Night** (Castle Hill) leaves the subject of Cassavetes as muddy as before.

Opening Night (1978) deals with the production of a play that is trying out in New Haven, then heading for Broadway. Most of the film takes place in New Haven. (Nothing looks like anything I ever saw in that city—no small matter in a picture whose unseen motto is "Nitty Gritty.") The story centers on the star of the show, played by Gena Rowlands.

She is a drinker, and her tippling is heightened by the death of a fan, a young woman who is killed by another car when she scrambles after Rowlands's limo outside the stage door. The accident becomes a metaphor for the star: to this middle-aging woman, it's as if her last grip on youth had slipped. She is haunted, in fantasy, by reappearances of the young woman. The role that the star is performing in the play-within-the-film is also a middle-aging woman, torn between her ex-husband and a lover. The screenplay is structured, somewhat too neatly, around mirror images throughout, and Cassavetes underlines this pattern by the frequent use of mirrors in his shooting.

But the picture wobbles—for two principal reasons. First, not for the only time in this director's work, Rowlands. She was Cassavetes's wife, and he was devoted to her as an actress, but her acting simply doesn't repay his devotion. It's difficult enough to believe in Rowlands as that actress offstage, but when she is onstage—in rehearsal or performance—the idea that she is a commanding star is quite beyond belief. She has no depth, no resonance, no flourish of technique, no (the inevitable word) personality. Her features are milky and bland, and for some reason, her eyebrows here are made to curve upward at the inner ends, lending a pitiful touch. The only reason that she is the star of this film, and the play within it, is that she has the most lines and the camera is on her more than on others.

Ironically, Rowlands's defects are italicized by Cassavetes himself. He plays an actor who is the lover in the play and who offstage has been the star's lover. He refers to himself bitterly as a subsidiary actor in the show. But when they are onstage together, Cassavetes blows Rowlands away. She is just a woman with some lines of dialogue, who makes faces consonant with them. He is a power.

Then there's the credibility of the theatrical milieu. Almost everything about the play's production is either cliché or fakery. These aspects combine in the last section, the Broadway opening. Because of her inner turmoil about aging and love, Rowlands turns up at the theater on opening night very late and very drunk. (It's not clear why the packed house has waited for her or why the producer takes so long to speak to the audience.) Rowlands is so soused that she can't walk. The play's director makes her crawl to her dressing room. Then coffee is administered, and we know she will come 'round, will perform, and will get an ovation at the finish. This, from a filmmaker rebelliously interested in truth, is shocking. It's the merest 1930s Hollywood show-biz claptrap.

Still, there is some slash and acid in the film, some subtle byplay, particularly from Cassavetes and from Ben Gazzara, who is the show's director. Enough so that Cassavetes remains a problem.

I've heard that there are music videos with subtitles. I wish they had put subtitles on Madonna's **Truth or Dare** (Miramax). I'd have got more out of it if I had understood what she and her backup groups were actually singing. At one point in the film she says that her performances aren't regular shows, they're theatrical presentations of her music. I wish I'd comprehended the lyrics of that music.

Still, there's a lot besides the songs and the shows. *Truth or Dare* is much more

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Angel at My Table. *Jane Campion's fictional re-creation of Janet Frame's autobiography, from childhood to maturity, from New Zealand to England to Spain and back home. Refreshingly direct, open, humane. (Reviewed 6/3/91)* **The Comfort of Strangers.** *Harold Pinter's screenplay (from Ian McEwan's novel) is eerily fascinating, even if finally imperfect. This Eros-Thanatos story, set in Venice, is deftly directed by Paul Schrader and is excellently acted. (4/29/91)* **Requiem for Dominic.** *An almost incredible re-creation of an episode in the Romanian revolution, 1989. A dead man's name is cleared, and the cruelties of revolution are well dramatized. (5/20/91)* **Truly, Madly, Deeply.** *For connoisseurs of acting. This British story is slushy, but the acting of Juliet Stevenson and others is reward in itself. (5/27/91)* —**SK**

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than a concert chronicle: it's a documentary, ingeniously directed by Alek Keshishian, of a Madonna tour or tours, from Japan through Toronto (a threat of police censorship here), various American cities (notably her hometown Detroit), France, Italy (another bit of censorship), and Spain. The people in the film include a lot of the Madonna entourage, plus her family in Detroit, various film figures (one of them Warren Beatty, her boyfriend at the time, and another, in Spain, Pedro Almodóvar). All of them seem fodder for Madonna's voracious appetite—not so much for conventional publicity as for the gobbling up of any distinction between life and publicity.

Her frankness seems less compulsive honesty than a campaign to build up a public persona of frankness. Yet, ultimately, this self-conscious honesty seems her only authentic honesty. When she lets us see her having a throat examination or lying prostrate on her mother's grave or rough-and-tumbling with the gay men in her group or holding group prayers before a show or demonstrating how she fellates (using a Vichy bottle), it is the exhibitionism of a simon-pure exhibitionist.

Sandra Bernhard, a friend, has a conversation with Madonna near the end of the film that's one of the most engaging sequences. It prompts a comparison between Bernhard's *Without You I'm Nothing* and *Truth or Dare*. Bernhard's film centers on a nightclub performance from which expeditions are made into her life and views. It's a novel work of art. Madonna's film is an assault-by-frankness on an established form, the pop-music documentary, which has been around since Albert and David Maysles's film about the Beatles, *What's Happening* (1964). Madonna apparently wanted to make sure that any future film of this kind would have to reckon with hers—which is true.

Is Madonna a symbol of our times? Well, she certainly provides tens of thousands of young people in many countries with hours of rebellion against restraints, as they see them, in their lives and futures. Only one point is worrisome: her audiences may think that by shouting ecstatically while Madonna humps around on a bed wearing a crucifix, they have struck a significant blow for truth, justice, liberty, etc. ●

Robert Brustein on Theater

Dress-up Plays

A friend of mine has a name for the work of young playwrights who address adult themes and subjects by simulating the styles of more established writers (Edward Albee's *Tiny Alice* is the prime example). He calls them "dress-up plays," by analogy with the way children like to dress up in their parents' clothes—little boys wearing Daddy's key chain, little girls teetering in Mommy's high heels. The "dress-up play" is a step up from the "diaper play," Benedict Nightingale's scornful label for the romance that theatrical neophytes like to spin out of their childhood traumas. But, as a generic rubric, it is equally condescending and more than a little dismissive. I borrow the phrase with apologies as a useful way of describing the perfectly respectable efforts of budding playwrights marking time while trying to accumulate enough experience to write about.

The Substance of Fire by Jon Robin Baitz might be considered a plausible example of the dress-up genre. Baitz is a gifted writer, and his subject—the relations between a Jewish literary intellectual and his family—is hardly territory that has been exhausted on the stage. Baitz, furthermore, approaches this relatively original material with considerable compassion and intelligence. The dressing up is largely in the formal execution, which seems to me somewhat derivative, altogether grounded, incompletely imagined. In the solid production it is receiving at Playwrights Horizon in New York, *The Substance of Fire*, like the author's previous *The Film Society*, signals the arrival of a potentially strong talent with unimpeachably decent convictions. What's missing is the visionary force, the imaginative fuel, that would propel his work beyond the social earnestness associated with the name of Arthur Miller.

The Substance of Fire has value largely as a study of intelligence in decay. Isaac Geldhart, a refugee from Nazi Germany, runs a quality publishing house on the brink of bankruptcy. Nobody at present is showing much interest in two-volume tomes titled *The Destruction of the Sephardim During the Spanish Inquisition* or reprints of B. Traven and L. Pirandello.

Daniel Yankelovich

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The firm hasn't published a popular book in seven years, and Isaac's projected six-volume series on Nazi medical experiments is hardly likely to dominate the best-seller charts. The occasion for the first act is a crisis meeting of the firm's directors, who are also Isaac's children: Martin, who teaches landscape architecture at Vassar; Sarah, who does TV commercials; Aaron, who has an MBA. The issue that divides them is the publication of a potentially successful manuscript that Isaac absolutely loathes.

What distinguishes this sequence is literate book chat and reflections on the modern publishing industry. While his children criticize his extravagances—he has paid a fortune for a postcard painted by Hitler—and his apocalyptic obsessions ("It's all death camps and napalm and atrocities with you"), Isaac regards himself as an out-of-step defender of serious literature, which is now defunct in a philistine world. He is losing money, he thinks, because people have changed: "There used to be some silence in life—now there's none." Simon and Schuster is being run by an oil cartel, not people of sensibility. An author like Tama Janowitz writes not a book but a dress—"for an anorexic model."

Isaac's nostalgia, however, is fading into neoconservatism. He is contemptuous not only of trash but of Stravinsky and Diaghilev, and his relations with his children can be charitably described as indifferent. Aaron is just an "accountant." Sarah he scorns for her "Neighborhood Playhouse psychology." And he coldly rejects the affectionate advances of his "gardener" son, Martin, to the point of refusing to join him for lunch. Unwilling to deal with his financial difficulties in a realistic way, he disdains any compromise or accommodation with "some shit-s democratic committee" telling him what to do. The act culminates in a power struggle and a stalemate that will dissolve the firm, with Sarah concluding, "You just don't know how to love."

If the play had ended there, it would have constituted a well-shaped character study of a familiar New York intellectual type, grown increasingly cranky in a changing environment—neocon prototypes abound. But Baitz proves unable to face the consequences of his own invention. The second act (it takes place three-and-a-half years later in Isaac's dilapidated apartment) is mainly an encounter between Isaac and a psychiatric social worker whom Martin has engaged to evaluate his mental competence ("It would help if you could remember the days of the week." "Why?"). Although the play continues to focus on the deterioration of this misanthropic misfit—Isaac, in an extended depression, has been unable to pay his bills—it ends with a plunge into soapsuds. Isaac dissolves in tears after telling about the extermination of his family in the Holocaust and the medical problems of his children (Martin had cancer as a child). Having burned his Hitler postcard in symbolic repudiation of his past, he makes a dinner date with the social worker, leaving his house for the first time in years.

Baitz is not the first American playwright compelled to soften a mostly unpleasant dramatic character. The redemptive conclusion of John Guare's otherwise fine *Six Degrees of Separation* was recently and drastically revised by the scam artist on whom the work was based. Instead of asking his victims for help and forgiveness, as in the play, he's currently under a restraining order for trying to extort money from the playwright through threats on his life. In the theater, either for progressive or commercial reasons (they're usually the same), consistency of character is often less compelling than moral rehabilitation. *The Substance of Fire* has good performances from Ron Rifkin as Isaac, his British-Yiddish inflections applied like an imaginary yarmulke, and from Patrick Breen, loose and effortless as Martin, while the director, Dan Sullivan, along with designers John Lee Beatty (sets), Jess

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Goldstein (costumes), and Arden Fingerhut (lights), creates an illusion of size on a small stage. As for the playwright, he undoubtedly has a fine future ahead of him once he grows into his own clothes.

Our Country's Good by Timberlake Wertenbaker wears the clothes of Bertolt Brecht and Caryl Churchill. Based on Thomas Keneally's novel *The Playmaker*, a historical tale about a group of eighteenth-century English convicts in an Australian penal colony enacting George Farquahar's comedy *The Recruiting Officer*, it's been turned into a moral tale about theater's civilizing influence on unlettered unfortunates. In his Pyramus and Thisbe sequences, Shakespeare proved a lot more inspired, because a lot less inspirational, about the rehearsal procedures of illiterate rustics. And Brecht and Churchill were considerably more tough-minded about the character of the underclass, which is why *Our Country's Good* strikes me as a dress-up play. *Our Country's Good* has won a lot of awards in London and will undoubtedly win a lot more here. That's probably the best way to describe it—as an award-winning play. I've read it twice and seen it twice, first in Hartford, more recently in the revised Hartford Stage Company production at the Nederlander in New York. The Broadway version is more finished, but it still left me squirming. This is one of those works that grows off you rather than on you.

I failed to find a single believable character in the play, none able to arouse any new understanding. The officers are either benevolently tolerant or malevolently bigoted, the exception being a Provost Marshal who agonizes over his inhumanity to man, while the convicts (played by the same actors) are largely conceived as nature's noblemen and women unjustly treated by a repressive society. As for the plot, this is fattened with repetitive debates over the value of convicts staging a play, the difficulty of rehearsing roles under the threat of execution, the growing love of a male officer for a female convict, and the boring conscience pangs of the Provost Marshal.

The writing is literate and a good deal more serious than the production, which struck me as artificial. There is some spine in Wertenbaker's prose; Mark Lamos's direction weakens it. Virtually every scene, no matter how grim, concludes with a directorial tag—a look, a smirk, a grimace, a twirl—so that the audience finds itself being manipulated into applause, even when the issue is a hanging. The lights are turned down during scene changes; the Brechtian style demands that they be turned up. Even costume changes occur in the dark, though much depends on our knowing that they are interchangeable. And Christopher Barreca's fine design of a ship reduced to its skeletal ribs, instead of being used as an organic part of the show, functions mainly as decoration.

As for the acting, only two or three performances rise above the level of reppy competence: Tracey Ellis brings a delicate minimalism to the part of Mary, the semi-virgin beloved of the fresh-faced Lieutenant (sensitively performed by Peter Frechette) who rehearses the convicts. And Cherry Jones contributes strength and resolution to the role of an unrepentant, rotten-toothed renegade gradually brought under the humanizing sway of Thespis. (For the record, I should mention that Jones acts with my company—which is also the reason that I'm convinced that the occasional gallery-playing of this truthful actress must be directorially imposed.)

One ends up feeling cheated out of enjoying the full version of *The Recruiting Officer*—all we see are rehearsal snippets—for Farquahar's play, unlike award-winning works of the contemporary theater, is robust, colorful, and full of surprise. And that, I guess, is the fundamental limitation of the dress-up play: it doesn't surprise. The purpose of dramatic art, however, is to tell the truth in an imaginative way, and the truth is always unpredictable. Lopahin destroys a

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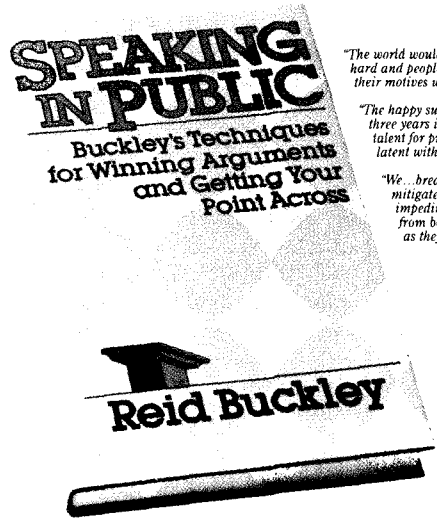

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beautiful cherry orchard and dispossesses the Ranevsky family—but he is an entirely decent fellow, the only one in the district who does a full day's work. Mother Courage represents Greed battening on War, and she's ultimately responsible for the death of her three children—but she also has "the courage to be" (in Tillich's phrase) in the face of persuasive arguments for suicide. These are characters imagined by dramatic artists. They show that the human soul will not be tailored to the rigid measurements of politics or morality. They are created by writers wearing their own clothes. ●

Naipaul fiddles while India burns.

Cry, the Beloved Subcontinent

BY AKEEL BILGRAMI

I.

The obscurities and the passions that surround the idea of a nation afflict some populations more than others. The reasons for these differences are so complex and so entrenched that it seems almost too much to ask for a diagnosis, let alone for a cure. V. S. Naipaul, pondering contemporary India in his new book, is not depressed by this fact. And, as one has come to expect from him, he does not bother to make much of an effort at diagnosis. Instead he offers a series of detailed interviews with people chosen as typical of some aspiring community or interest group. By the end of his long book he expresses a tentative and unexpected optimism about his ancestral homeland, on the ground that at least its strong feelings and ill-understood issues are being channeled in a political and social direction. This momentum has resulted not only in sectarian hatred and violence, spectacularly revealed in the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi last week, but more insidiously in the criminalization of ordinary politics. Naipaul notices this, but he is not stricken with qualm.

This is Naipaul's third book on India. The first, *An Area of Darkness*, written in 1962 on his first visit, was a rather hysterical response to the pervasive poverty and superstition and cruelty that he encountered. Writing now about his outburst of thirty years ago, he admits with disarming candor to the tortured psychic ground underlying his initial perception: "My ancestors had left as indentured servants for the sugar estates of Guyana and Trinidad. I had carried in my bones that idea of abjectness and defeat and shame. It was the idea I had taken to India on that slow journey by train and ship in 1962; it was the source of my nerves." Naipaul's second book, *India: A Wounded Civilization*, appeared in 1975, during the reign of Indira Gandhi, and it sedated the earlier pessimism. Having sedated it, however, Naipaul nursed it devotedly. The people he met were still defeated and backward; they had not yet found their will and their national identity.

Those books succeeded in annoying many Indians. They annoyed a large class of readers because Indians have always been a little defensive about criticism from outsiders, and Naipaul spoke with the prose and the mentality of a floundering foreigner. But it also annoyed many readers because his cultural commentary typically combined an effortless contempt with a cultivated ignorance of the historical and the institutional sources of a culture's surface presentation. His new book, it seems safe to say, will appease the first kind of critic; it is much more generous, and the shrill voice of a high-strung, reactive, alien sensibility is gone. The second kind of critic, however, will still stamp about in exasperation. Naipaul's contempt for India has been withdrawn, but his indifference to explanation remains.

India: A Million Mutinies Now
by V. S. Naipaul
(Viking, 521 pp., $24.95)

His theme is the theme that dominates India's public life. It is, in his own words, "A million mutinies, supported by twenty kinds of group excess, sectarian excess, religious excess, regional excess . . . ," contrasted with "a central will, a central intellect, a national idea." The book concludes with a comment on this theme of contrast:

> The Indian Union was greater than the sum of its parts; and many of these movements of excess strengthened the Indian state, defining it as a source of law and civility and reasonableness. . . . And—strange irony—the mutinies were not to be wished away. They were part of the beginning of a new way for millions, part of India's growth, part of its restoration.

Naipaul's conclusion may be sound. The problem is that nothing in this book gives him the right to his conclusion. His method for the study of a culture is simple. He begins with a brief observation of what some community seems like from the outside, and then he proceeds to step inside by letting one or two of its members speak to him of their lives, of their political and personal triumphs and tribulations. A generalization followed by a talking head. The conversations are clearly meant both to redeem and to revise the initial observation by adding a very specific kind of proof, a particular voice telling a personal but supposedly representative history, which Naipaul then sums up in another brief description.

About the Sikhs, for example, Naipaul observes initially:

> To most people what had happened in the Punjab was a pure tragedy, and not easy to understand. From the outside, it seemed that the Sikhs had brought this tragedy on themselves, manufacturing grievances out of their great success in India. It was as if there was some intellectual or emotional flaw in the community, as if in their fast, unbroken rise over the last century there had developed a lack of balance between their material achievement and their internal life, so that, though in one way so adventurous and forward-looking, in another way they remained close to their tribal and country origins.

Or, after chatting with one of his Muslim protagonists, he concludes:

> His orthodox faith was the one pure thing he had to hold on to. He couldn't imagine life without it. It was a stringent faith. It shut out television; it had no room for heretics. All the many rules and celebrations and proscriptions were part of the completeness of Anwar's world. Take away one practice and everything was threatened; everything might start to unravel. It was correct, for instance, for Muslim men to pee squatting; and I heard later from someone who worked with Anwar that Anwar insisted on doing this at the modern urinals in his place of work, though it created problems for him.

But the "manufactured grievance" and the "tragedy" of the Sikhs is nowhere evaluated (not even by the Sikhs interviewed) as a grievance manufactured, to a large extent, by the Congress

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Party high command in New Delhi, nowhere diagnosed as a tragedy of the failure of federal rule. Naipaul's colorful gloss on the insular withdrawal of Anwar and other Muslims into the shell of their religion is nowhere situated in the larger picture of a struggle between a minority and the will of an elite to perpetuate a majoritarian myth. Their withdrawal reflects a very specific form of defensiveness, as well as an adaptive failure on the part of Indian Muslims, issuing from a very specific ongoing historical and political context; but this, again, is nowhere divulged. And these are just two examples of a lack that recurs throughout this long book. The interviews and the portraits do not lack charm, and they will often move you; but they will also frustrate you with their lack of intellectual substance. Naipaul's theme, alas, is too large and too deep for this limited method.

It is in this book, then, that something fundamental about Naipaul gets vividly exposed, perhaps for the first time. For years, his impatience with the cultures about which he wrote irritated readers who had some familiarity with those cultures. This book's attentive sympathy demonstrates, in retrospect, that those flaws were superficial. Without the distraction of Naipaul's arrogance, we can see more clearly now that there is a great gap between the ambitiousness of his choice of subjects and the limitations of his mind, and that this gap has been the deeper source, in his works of nonfiction, of his shortcomings as a writer.

II.

In independent nation-states, nationalist sentiment against existing governments has taken two opposing forms: the demand for secession (as in various regions of India, Pakistan, and the Soviet Union) and the demand for unification (as in Germany and, from time to time, in the Middle East). The former is often due to a perception by particular ethnic communities of domination by the central government, especially when the central government is itself dominated by a single ethnic community. (This is truer of the Soviet Union and Pakistan than it is of India.) The latter is usually a response to the sense of an external imposition of boundaries, as in Germany, or to a perceived threat from an external enemy in their midst, as in the Arab world.

Writers on India ritualistically remark on India's diversity. But the reason that India presents a particularly difficult and complex picture is that these two forms of nationalist sentiment, the centrifugal one and the centripetal one, coexist in India. They crisscross in ways that require careful study and analysis.

It is hard to come to a judgment about the demand for secession in India, because an impartial and sober observer must acknowledge both the dubious workability of breakaway regional nations as well as the plausibility of the grievance in the regions against obsessively meddlesome and shortsighted central governments, which persistently ignore considerations of regional autonomy and self-governance in favor of immediate political and electoral gains. This pattern is particularly vivid in Punjab, where the extremist Sikh element was initially encouraged by Indira Gandhi's government in order to undermine the popularity of the Akali Dal, the moderate Sikh party, and in turn to promote the influence of her own regional Congress Party. When the extremists grew in strength as a result of this tired and cynical divide-and-conquer policy, she cracked down on them with a ferocity and an ineptitude that led directly to the incendiary situation that we have been witnessing for the past several years. For similar reasons, successive central governments are much to blame for the turn of regional movements in Kashmir and Assam from the demand for greater autonomy to the demand for wholesale independence.

The movement toward unification in India is found in religious communities, rather than in ethnic communities, most particularly among the Hindus, who constitute 80 percent of the population. (There are about 700 million Hindus in India and about 94 million Muslims.) The issue has nothing to do with boundaries. It is stimulated, rather, by the historical claim to a unified Hinduism. The Hindu community in India has begun to define itself monolithically, with a view to seeking protection against what is perceived to be an increasing loss of identity and power in the face of the rights won by the Muslims as a minority in a secular nation. Here, too, the electoral ambitions of Indira Gandhi's Congress Party have initiated the problem as we see it today.

Communal tension between Hindus and Muslims has existed ever since the British first introduced separate electorates in the provinces. It came to a head in the partition of India, which was owed in part to the manipulation of the Muslim masses by the Muslim League under Muhammad Ali Jinnah, and to the inability of the (officially secular-minded) Congress Party leadership to convince the Muslims that they had a secure place in a postindependence India. Communal tensions and riots persisted, of

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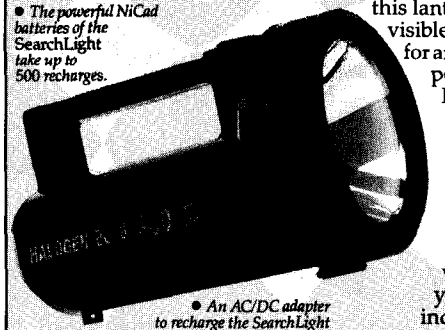

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course, through the period of independence, but the present threat to secularism within India began to take shape in the 1980s. Indira Gandhi, who had long claimed popular support for her party with the empty electoral slogan "Remove poverty" (as if one could run on the platform "Retain poverty"!), was fast losing that support, not least because poverty was manifestly not being removed. Confronted with this loss of a populist secular base, she and her son Sanjay Gandhi decided to cultivate the support of the majority religious community, first against the Sikhs and then more carefully and subtly against the Muslims.

After her assassination in 1984, her other son, Rajiv Gandhi, continued this electoral strategy as prime minister, playing willingly to Hindu revivalist sentiments over the awful issue of the mosque at Ayodhya during the last national elections in 1989. This has created a political atmosphere in which the blatantly Hindu and anti-secular Bharatiya Janata Party can now flex its muscles and demand a Hindu Raj. In the last elections, the Congress Party and the BJP more or less openly appealed to the idea of an India under Hindu rule in order to win seats and offices.

Just as the Islamization program coming from Islamabad is an appeal to a spurious unifying ideology by a Punjabi community desperate to retain its hegemony in Pakistan against increasing demands by the other ethnic communities, the present reassertion of a unified Hinduism in India, and the extreme communal feeling it has generated in the country's heartland, is the desperate counter by middle-class Hindus against any popular feeling that might develop for a more socially egalitarian and casteless society. Islam, being a doctrinal religion, makes it easier for the rulers of Pakistan to pursue such a program; they can distract from the urgent needs and demands of their people by appealing directly to the political dreams of portions of the Quran and its medieval interpretation in the Sharia. But Hinduism is not a doctrinal religion. For Hindus to make the same claims, its leaders must appeal to history, to a pre-Islamic "golden age," which has been carefully constructed upon a deliberate falsification of diverse religious traditions.

The idea of a monolithic and majoritarian Hinduism is a wholly mythical creation. It goes back a long way, as myths will, into the recesses of Indian history, and it has helped to perpetuate the most remarkably resilient inegalitarian society in the world. The idea is the product of a sustained effort over centuries on the part of the Hindu upper castes to perpetuate their hold not only on the bases of political power, but also on the Hindu psyche.

V. S. NAIPAUL BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

This Brahmanical ascendancy had its ancient origins in a priesthood that made alliances with kings and their officials as well as with the landed gentry. Through the control of religious ritual and the language of ritual (Sanskrit), and with the force of the Kshatriyas (the predominantly military caste) behind them, it gradually created a nationwide hegemony for the upper castes. Under the feudal rulers during the period of Muslim rule, and later in the British colonial state, upper-caste Hindus flourished in the state apparatus, and today they by and large dominate the executive and the economic governance of the country. This supremacy may be found both at the center and in many regions, especially in the so-called cow-belt, the states roughly in the northern and central regions of the country, where upper-caste Hindus occupy most of the offices and positions in the bureaucracy, in industry, and in the academy.

What is remarkable about this abiding control over the levers of power is that through the centuries it gave rise to a Brahmanical ideological tradition that co-opted all efforts to reform Hinduism, from the Arya-Samaj movement in the north to the Brahmo-Samaj movement in Bengal, both of which began in the late nineteenth century. Even intellectual and social movements that started with the avowed intention of raising the status and the political consciousness of the lower castes deteriorated into elitist or anti-Muslim organizations. In the process of such a pan-Indian ideological construction, the lower castes were silenced. Moreover, there occurred a deliberate obscuring of the highly differentiated local histories and the diverse vernacular religious traditions in which caste divisions played no significant religious or social role. This construction steadily erased the legacy and the roots of heterodox religious and populist movements, from the ancient Bhakti cults to more recent syncretic movements such as the cults of Kabir and the Sikh saint Guru Nanak. (A similar process of elitist construction and erasure of local heterodox traditions—though with nothing like the specific caste orientation of Hinduism—informed the rise of the urban professional classes in the Muslim community, a process that culminated in the creation of Pakistan.)

There is, then, a double dissimulation. The tradition of pan-Indian Brahmanical ideology, which pretends to speak for a unified Hinduism, and which to a large extent defines itself today against secular concessions to religious minorities, is

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based on a denial of two quite different things. It refuses to acknowledge the deeply inegalitarian caste divisions that characterize the Hindu society that it has come to represent; and it denies a historical place to the multifarious local Hinduisms that it has slowly erased, and that flourished throughout Indian history without any particular hostility to secular conceptions, without any place for the hierarchy of caste.

The frenzied communal passions of the Hindus and the Muslims that have been unleashed in the past year can only be understood against the background of this construction of a false unity. India adopted a secular national polity after independence, and has maintained it with hazard over the last forty-four years. There have been eruptions of Hindu-Muslim violence from time to time in different parts of the country, in which the Muslims, who are the overwhelming minority, have tended to suffer the greater destruction. In the past year or more, however, there has been sustained communal extremism unlike anything since the days just before and after partition. And things have now come to a crux, because this conflict provides the most available sustained distraction from recent efforts to expose the myth of a unified, majoritarian Hindu society.

Last year, toward the end of his brief tenure as prime minister, V. P. Singh declared his intention to implement the suggestions of a commissioned report on the status of the "backward" castes. The Mandal Commission report had concluded that 27 percent of central and local government jobs should be reserved for these disadvantaged Hindus. The decision to implement this was a bold move; it would strike a first blow against upper-caste domination, especially in the states of the cow-belt. It went beyond the empty legislative decrees that have formally outlawed casteism, and it gave substance to the hitherto hypocritical rhetoric of social equality that all parties produce before each election. In a word, it exposed and attacked the myth of a monolithic Hinduism, by acknowledging in deed rather than word that caste inequalities exist at the very heart of the nation's centers of power.

Middle-class and upper-class Hindus in these states (who, not surprisingly, coincide with the privileged castes) responded to Singh's decision with such hysteria and public violence that it gave rise to a panic within his own ruling party. There were substantial defections in Parliament, and Singh was forced out of government. But toppling the government did not by itself make the issue that the Mandal Commission addressed go away. Thus the BJP, which represents the more or less prosperous Hindus of these regions, is making every effort to banish the issue by campaigning, with greater vehemence than any party has ever dared, on the revivalist platform of a Hindu Raj. It claims that the medieval period of pre-Islamic Hindu India must be revived, and argues that the morale and the united strength of Hindus are being daily undermined by secular concessions granted to minorities by the leaders of the country. The fact that such unity never really existed is being covered over once again, and in the old way: by pointing to the enemy within, whose suppression would restore the distant and glorious past.

The immediate symbolic ploy in this devious strategy fastens on the wretched question of a mosque in the northern town of Ayodhya. For four centuries Ayodhya has housed a mosque called Babri Masjid. Within its compound, however, about a hundred steps from the *masjid*, there is a raised platform (or *chabutra*) where Hindus have worshiped, believing it to be the birthplace of Rama. In December 1949, the local police subinspector filed a report that said that on the night of December 22 the mosque had been broken into by some fifty persons who placed idols of Rama and Sita in it. When the report reached Prime Minister Nehru, he was outraged and ordered that the statues be removed immediately.

But the local district magistrate, who later ran for elections on the Hindu party ticket, urged that no such thing be done, citing the "suffering which it will entail for many innocent lives" in a swiftly accelerating, communally explosive situation. For within hours of the violation of the mosque, thousands of Hindus had gathered to demand the right to worship there. Claims were being made about the miraculous appearance of the idols. And this "miracle" was taken to be retrospective proof that the mosque had indeed been built on the site of a temple consecrating Rama's birthplace, which was supposed to have been destroyed by the Muslim emperor Babar in the sixteenth century.

Protracted legal wrangles ensued, without any satisfactory solution to the communal conflict. Now the BJP vows that it will, if elected, correct a historical injustice against the Hindus by destroying the mosque and building a temple in its place. Meanwhile a number of India's most distinguished historians have categorically denied that there is a shred of evidence for these claims, and have cited

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the Archaeological Survey of India's reports of excavations in this area. In a letter to the *Times of India*, they concluded that "it is a debasement of history to distort these events for present day communal propaganda."

Ayodhya has become the symbol of India's struggle for a secular future. By asking that Hindus recognize the strength of their majority status and vote them in on the mandate of Hinduizing India, the BJP is trying to profit from one of democracy's most elementary paradoxes: that one can exploit democratic institutions and civil liberties to subvert those very things. If the BJP is successful, and if it sticks to its word, the minorities of India, the Muslims most especially, will rightly see this as the end of secular citizenship. They will almost certainly begin to think the unthinkable: a second partition.

For seventeen initial years the leadership of independent India fell into the hands of Jawarhalal Nehru, India's greatest public figure, arguably greater (on the questions of secularism and communalism) than Mahatma Gandhi. Nehru's vision of a modern, secular India was conceded by even his most vocal critics to be a genuine and honorable commitment. A comparison with Pakistan after 1948, that is, after the untimely death of Jinnah (who had much the same vision as Nehru for the newly created Muslim nation), and a comparison with what might have happened if other leaders such as Vallabhai Patel had been at the helm in India, must allow the conclusion that, to a considerable extent, Nehru did succeed. Still, if we look around India today, we must judge the secular success of his long rule as, at best, a holding process.

The question is, then, why did Nehru's vision fail to take hold? This is a large and complicated matter. But a simple and central fact upon which a fuller answer must build is that Nehru was the leader of a party that from the very beginning, despite all its secular and egalitarian pronouncements, did not make any serious effort to destroy the consolidations of Brahmanical power and ideology. Though it would be unfair to compare the Congress Party with the communally oriented nationalist campaign of the Muslim League, the fact is that from the earliest phases of the independence movement it, too, appealed to separatist and inflammatory communal symbolism, specifically to the symbolism of a Brahmanical Hindu culture, to mobilize the masses. When it made gestures of support to Muslims in order to recruit them, it often did so in ways that encouraged the most retrograde element in the Muslim community, as in Gandhi's support of the Khilafat movement, or the movement to restore the Caliph—a move echoed by Rajiv Gandhi's recent support of the thoroughly reactionary Muslim Women's Bill. In this way, it encouraged a corrosive communal ethos among the minorities as well.

Since Nehru's passing, his familial heirs have not only given up the holding process, they have begun to reassert the importance of that mythical Hindu construction in order to win votes. India will hold its elections this spring. The only party that holds out hope for India's secular ideals is V. P. Singh's Janata Dal, and its scatter of smaller and more left-wing partners. It is altogether unlikely that they will win enough seats to take the reins of government on their own. India is stuck with coalition politics, then, for a while to come. But Singh has not defected from his promise to pursue the aspirations voiced in the Mandal Commission. No doubt there is much that is problematic about his position. He has been accused of having adopted these ideals to build a popular base among the lower castes against rivals in his party, which may be the case. There is also the worry that he has invited caste-oriented politics and more communal hatred. But this is a worry that accompanies all such aspirations for social reform, and it should not detract from the genuine initial achievement, however small and however preliminary, of the stand that he has taken.

The fact is that Singh has directly called into question the infinite survival of one of the most fantastic forms of social evil in history. As a system of discrimination, the Hindu caste system has never been equaled. Singh has, whatever his motives, opened up the possibility of an alliance between the Muslims and the lower castes, and in doing so he has revived the possibility of many cultured, grass-roots political alliances that would unsettle the myth that India's national unity can only be imposed from the top by an upper-caste, middle-class, pan-Indian ruling elite.

The idea of the Indian nation, which has never been as precarious as it is now, needs such a redefinition of the process by which unity can be retained. The federal unity that will emerge from diverse coexisting cultural traditions without inegalitarian social formations is far more likely to pull India out of the present crisis of nationhood than a mythical unity with caste inequalities at its very core. And such a redefinition of unity will remove the neurotic obsession of governments with centrist power. It will allow for a framework of central government that readily concedes cultural and political autonomy to the regions. In India's tense mixture of secessionist and unificationist sentiments, in other words, such a redefinition of unity will pre-empt the secessionist threat.

If the forces that Singh's stand have released can eventually shape such a transformation in the very ideal of an Indian Union, then Naipaul may be right about his central theme. There may be a reason to find heart in the "million mutinies," in the recent rise of multifarious aspirations and activisms among the people of India. But to say this is to say something much more nuanced and much more guarded than what Naipaul himself says.

Naipaul's book offers no understanding of how these aspirations are caught up in the entrenched institutional and ideological frameworks of the country. His optimism, therefore, seems indiscriminate and perverse. Indiscriminate, because his wide-ranging conversations with aspiring individuals by themselves reveal nothing of what is needed for such optimism to be borne out; nor how fragile and conditional such optimism ought to be. And perverse, because he is, after two excoriating accounts written in periods of relative stability in India, now applauding from the sidelines at precisely the moment that India is terrifyingly on the verge of a breakdown of governance, and of a surrender of the values of modernity that have so far defined its conception of itself. When India was more stable and more admirable, Naipaul scorned it. When it finds itself in moral and political danger, he embraces it.

He observes that "what the mutinies were helping to define was the strength of the general intellectual life, and the wholeness and humanism of the values to which all Indians could appeal." Even at first sight—and this book gives us, in typical Naipaul fashion, only a first sight—this is a numbing falsehood. The antics of the BJP, and the reactionary and defensive response of the Muslims, are as far from the wholeness and the humanism of those values as any political movement can be. And the demands of the Sikhs for an independent Khalistan are demands that have been largely created by the electoral ambitions of political parties. It is a shallow political sensibility that rests with the thought that demands induced by such artificial means are a sign of intellectual or moral strength. ●

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The Man Who Didn't Sleep

By Hermione Lee

Dickens
by Peter Ackroyd

(HarperCollins, 1,184 pp., $35)

The Invisible Woman:
The Story of Nelly Ternan and Charles Dickens
by Claire Tomalin

(Knopf, 317 pp., $25)

When Peter Ackroyd's 1,200-page biography of Dickens appeared in England, a friend of mine, a biographer herself, wanted to read it on a plane journey to Ireland. It was obviously unmanageable as hand-luggage, so she put it on her kitchen table, got out her bread knife, and sawed it in half. "It made two perfectly serviceable biographies," she observed. The bread knife school of criticism seems a particularly appropriate one to apply to a biography about a divided soul. Ackroyd's Dickens is a double agent so full of secrets, paradoxes, and contradictions that only the most puzzling and provisional conclusions can be reached about him, even after those 1,200 pages.

We have always known that Dickens's novels are crawling with doubles and secrets—false names, hidden plots, mislaid identities. Other biographers before Ackroyd—Fred Kaplan, Edgar Johnson, even the devoted John "Podsnap" Forster (none of whom Ackroyd has much time for)—have described Dickens's curious paradoxes. He was rampageously energetic and obsessively orderly, theatrically exhibitionist and nervously private, a family man and a clandestine lover, a dogged quarreler and a sentimental friend. All very English.

But Dickens was no ordinary Englishman. "Keep it down" is the peculiar motto of two of the male characters in *Our Mutual Friend*, his last finished novel, and a book full of secrets and doubles. Bradley Headstone, the murderous schoolteacher, tries to "keep down" his monomaniacal passion; John Harmon, alias John Rokesmith, the mutual friend, has to "keep down" his true identity. So did Dickens "keep down" his conflicting selves, most notoriously in his attempts to hide his secret love life (if that's what it was) with the actress Ellen Ternan under the mask of the moral family man, even after he had brutally evicted Catherine, his wife of twenty-two years. Like many of his characters, Dickens covered his tracks, burned diaries and letters, and became extraordinarily adept at disappearing acts.

Claire Tomalin approaches Dickens's doubleness more reprovingly than Ackroyd, and describes him "perfecting a way of life which allowed him freedom to come and go as he chose, always living in more than one place, and sometimes with three or even four semi-permanent addresses, quite apart from his reading tours and working trips." In *Our Mutual Friend*, there is much gossip about the Man from Somewhere ("Man from Nowhere, perhaps?" as the mutual friend is described at one point). Dickens's desire to be the Man from Nowhere involved, for long periods in his life, exhausting and elaborate arrangements—four secret days a week, late-night journeys, subterfuge trips to the office, fake appointments. (As Tomalin observes, all this depended heavily on the expanding rail network, which was a great boon to Victorian adulterers.)

Given this passion for doubling and splitting his life, it's alarmingly appropriate that when the clash between love for Ellen and resentment of Catherine became intolerable to him, he ordered the marital bedroom to be divided in two by a wooden partition. What strikes Ackroyd about this is not the frightful humiliation it caused Catherine. He remarks, rather, upon the symbolic rightness of it: "He was . . . literally sealing himself off from her."

But Dickens's secret lives were not only—or, according to Ackroyd, not much—bound up with sex. He suppressed the humiliations of his now famously miserable childhood (blacking factory, debtor's prison) under the busy noise of success; and he buried his morbidness and melancholy under the gregarious joviality his admirers wanted from him. It was, for a time, an all-too-successful subterfuge. "If you could make the public understand," his daughter Kate wrote to Bernard Shaw, "that my father was not a joyous, jocose gentleman walking about the world with a plum pudding and a bowl of punch, you would greatly oblige me."

As Ackroyd goes to great lengths to observe, every age re-creates its great writers, and "every biography is a prisoner of its time." The plum puddingy, Christmas Carol Dickens is long gone. In fact, Ackroyd is keener to reinvest in that Dickens than most late twentieth-century readers. He has a fondness for Pickwick's "benign comedy, of brotherhood, of love and blessed unity." He resuscitates Chesterton's view (an indulgent and misleading one, I think) "that there are not really distinct fictions but rather a continuous production of Dickensian *stuff* which is cut off into separate pieces and given separate names." And he allows himself a great deal of sentiment in the interpolated passages of fictional license that Ackroyd the novelist cannot resist introducing: in them we find Dickens's characters dancing and singing upon a magic hill as the nineteenth-century clouds darken, with Pickwick and his "beaming rubicund face" refusing to die. Such passages promote a romantic vision of characters living forever, outside the confines of their books, which Ackroyd resuscitates from a long-dead Chestertonian past of literary criticism.

It goes with his pleasure in the high-spirited, twinkling, junketing Dickens. Even so, Ackroyd's biography goes further than any before it in struggling with the strange splits and paradoxes of his subject. This is how he sums up, after 900 pages:

> Perhaps all that one can say of Dickens is that . . . he displayed more paradoxes than most. . . . For some he was the most delightful of companions, to others he appeared too masterful and domineering. . . . He was impulsive and yet disciplined, restless and yet systematic, modest in manner but driven always by the need for pre-eminence. He was of genial disposition, but he also possessed an inflexible and paramount will. He often maintained a cool or grave demeanor, even while hiding the "savage" or "wild animal" which he sometimes senses within himself. . . . He had an unshakeable belief in his own rightness, and yet he was extraordinarily sensitive to criticism.

And a few pages later he is at it again, applying the same tactics to Dickens's writing:

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Realism and fantasy. Comedy and pathos. Irony and sympathy. There was never anyone more likely to see the comic side of a somber scene, or to mock and undercut his own seriousness; when his fiction is surveyed in all its paradoxes, its inconsistencies and its complexities, it ought also to be emphasized that such ambivalences are not resolved because, given the nature of the man and of the writer, they could never be resolved. His books are in that sense as incomplete and as contradictory as his own self. As any human being.

By this point some readers might be asking for their money back—they haven't come all this way for a few platitudes about human contradictoriness. And Ackroyd's methods can be extremely irritating. Those pseudo-Dickensian itemized sentences ("Bewilderment. Rage. Misery." and so on), the indulgently rambling pontifications on personality and behavior, the whimsical forays into fictional fantasy, the lavishly repetitive interpretations of character should have had an editorial, failing an authorial, bread knife taken to them. Still, the longueurs are bound up with the idiosyncratic effort that Ackroyd is making to *embody* Dickens. Our knowledge of people, after all, is built out of repetition and accumulation; and that's how Ackroyd tries to make us know Dickens, through retelling and reinterpreting and sympathetically brooding over every feature of the writer's life.

By the end of the book, we do feel that if Dickens came into the room we would know exactly how he would look and how he would behave. We know how he tells a joke (grave-faced followed by a shout of laughter). We see his bright eyes and soft whiskers and the loud bright vulgar colors of his clothes; his tender and attentive manner with small children; the way he raises his eyebrows and nods his head when listening to an argument. We hear his cockneyisms ("Oh, law!") and the slight thickness in his speech. We catch him characteristically standing with head back, hat cocked, and a hand in his pocket, looking around with "rapid glance and quickly changing expression."

Dickens's places, too, from the Kentish towns of his childhood to all the corners of the "great wild city," to his prosperous backwater at Gad's Hill, are as powerfully evoked as the places in Ackroyd's own novels, especially in *Hawksmoor*, where the architect haunts the labyrinth of the city like Dickens walking his way through the landscapes he will fictionalize. For Ackroyd's Dickens is always walking, wandering alone as a small neglected child through London streets, gathering incidents and characters and turns of speech as he trudged through the terrible London slums as a young man, walking twenty or thirty miles at a time, at high speed, whenever he had surplus energy to work off or melancholy thoughts to escape. His sightseeing programs abroad were ones, as Forster said, of "dreadful insatiability." Wilkie Collins, after struggling behind him up a mountain in Cumbria with a sprained ankle, remarked feelingly that "a man who can do nothing by halves appears to me to be a fearful man."

It is precisely this extremism that appeals to Ackroyd. The stories that he most enjoys are those of Dickens laughing himself silly at funerals, or killing Dora ("I mean the Copperfield Dora") just after his daughter Dora is born, or pulling all the doorknobs in a Boston street so hard that one of them came off in his hand, and screaming with pleasure when he came to Boston's old South Church, which seemed to him so theatrical and unreal: "One would give almost anything to have heard that scream." Dickens's phenomenal energy—*in his writing to strenuous deadlines* all his life, in his total commitment to his theatrical hobbies, in his compulsion to carry on with exhausting public readings even when he was ill—is constantly emphasized.

Ackroyd is especially good on his subject's ruthlessness, and relishes the story of Dickens's reaction to a stage adaptation of *Nicholas Nickleby*, where Smike was given soppy remarks about "pretty helpless robins." "Damn the robins: cut them out." And Ackroyd is particularly fascinated by the rage for order. In a new house, Dickens had to rearrange every piece of furniture and have "chairs and tables in *precisely* the right position before he could get down to a day's work." His bed always had to be in a north-south direction, and wherever he was staying he always created a fixed regimen for work; he had to have all his peculiar favorite objects—a bronze image of two toads dueling, a paper-knife, "a dog-fancier with the puppies and dogs swarming all over him"—arranged on his desk for him to start writing.

This is an alarming version of Victorian genius; and Ackroyd, for whom haunting and terror and alienation are fictional obsessions, is much taken up

1969

These fingers flamed red in the snow when I was ten:
Numb at first, then pricklish, then the cold pain set in.
These fingers felt the first buds, and carried the stink of dogwood
bark into the kitchen;
They felt the heart battering in the bird's hot pocket and their own
pulse pressed to its throat.

These fingers—nineteen sixty-nine—feel the warm sheets
where grownups have passed the night,
The pig's dimpled neck, the wings in the web of the black widow,
And the cat's-tongue rasp of mint leaves in the mildewed shadows
where the water pipe drips.

Everywhere these fingers. In the brittle downswung hair of a woman,
In shadows spat on brickwalls, in rushing water,
In the little maps blue and red on the sleeping man's eyelids.

Greedy under the deaf-mute moon,
Under the shrubs where cats are munching lizards;
Sweat slick in hurry and fear, in the closets of chalk dust
and soft depression:
They are everywhere.

They are quiet now, these fingers, folded palm to palm;
The thumbs dropped, cocked a little, like anchors;
(the boy asleep now, the blue light on);
The four fingers tucked, almost distinguishable;
Like the three shapes the king called to in the fire—
Shadrach, Meshach, Abednago—
And the fourth shape that the king could not name.

Charlie Scott

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with how disconcerting Dickens could be, and how he was often, like so many of the characters in the novels, afraid of himself. But Ackroyd enriches this morbid, secret, neurotically restless characterization by continually asking about the relation between Dickens and the world that he inhabited. He makes us understand the reasons for Dickens's popularity very well. He shows us that the early Pickwickian benignity answered to a new sense of national identity, a middle-class surge in self-confidence that Dickens was peculiarly in tune with. His fascination with mesmerism and other new sciences, his sentimental radicalism, his ambition and energy and the often monstrous "triumph of his will"—all this was part of a personality that had the forces of the time running powerfully through it.

This complicated and mysterious relation between the writer and his time is one of Ackroyd's main and most successful themes. The questionable part of his interpretation lies in his idealization of Dickens's innocence. Ackroyd insists on a kind of infantilism and sublimated sexuality as the drive behind all of Dickens's relationships. Dickens's pity for himself as a child, his insatiable longing for love, and his extreme grief over the death of his young sister-in-law Mary Hogarth provide the sources for the puzzling relationship with Ellen Ternan, which Ackroyd insists must have been an idealized, chaste, naive passion. "Dickens was so odd," he argues, "that we should not fall into the trap of expecting him to behave in a conventional way with Ellen Ternan." Instead "the relationship between them acted for Dickens as the realization of one of his most enduring fictional fantasies. That of sexless marriage with a young, idealized virgin."

Ackroyd makes difficulties for himself here, because all our prejudices are against chastity or sexlessness. They are the twentieth-century biographical taboos. For a more convincing modern reading of Dickens's secret life, we need to go to Tomalin's biography of his "invisible woman," a plausible, elegant, and ingenious piece of historical sleuthing that marshals the same evidence to support an entirely different reading. All of Dickens's biographers have had something to say about the famous 45-year-old novelist's romantic infatuation with the 18-year-old actress. With her sisters, Ternan appeared in his production of Wilkie Collins's *The Frozen Deep,* and Dickens became besotted with her. There ensued the scandalous and very public separation from Catherine, the mysterious visits to France in the early 1860s, the dramatic train crash in Kent that revealed that Dickens was traveling with Ellen and her mother (and his manuscript of *Our Mutual Friend,* which he rescued by coolly climbing back into the wrecked carriage), the little establishment he set up in Slough under the name of "Mr. Tringham."

Tomalin and Ackroyd read this evidence very differently. The differences are often, intriguingly, matters of detail. When Dickens, protesting his innocence over his separation from Catherine, refers to the slandering of "a virtuous and spotless creature," Tomalin assumes it's Nelly; Ackroyd says he "clearly" means his sister-in-law Georgina, whom some people suspected of illicit relations with her brother-in-law, and whose name Dickens was anxious to clear. Ackroyd dismisses the possibility that Ellen's mother would have allowed her daughter to be turned into a "harlot." Tomalin sympathetically imagines how difficult it would have been for the mother to turn down the "seemingly limitless benefits and favors" that the novelist offered her family. Ackroyd is much more skeptical of the posthumous evidence, but Tomalin sees no reason to discredit the slow accumulation of handed-down rumors that gradually crept out from under Dickens's—and Nelly's—lifelong efforts at concealment.

Evidence is always at the mercy of the biographer, and Ackroyd is determined that his Dickens should be a repressed romantic. But if they weren't lovers, as one English reviewer remarked of Ackroyd's chaste view of the relationship, what did they do, have tea? Tomalin's more straightforward, indignant, feminist reading certainly makes a firmer, and probably more believable, case. Shifting the emphasis from Dickens to Ternan, she argues not only that they had an affair, but that Ternan may well have had two illegitimate children who died young. (Her carefully assembled evidence even includes the suggestion that the fashion for huge crinolines allowed for hidden pregnancies.) Tomalin imagines Ellen coming to resent her elderly lover and her concealed, marginalized status as a "kept woman," and writes eloquently on Nelly's release into a new life after Dickens's death, on her need to keep her past a secret, and on the shock to her son (vividly reconstructed) when he began, after his mother's death, to discover her true past.

Where Ackroyd romanticizes, Tomalin indicts. Her Dickens is a monster of self-deceiving egotism. She is much more severe on his treatment of his wife and family. Poor little Plorn, for instance, a "not very bright boy" of 16 packed off to Australia, is the cue for an attack on Dickens's ruthlessness and his "complete domination" over his family, whereas Ackroyd takes the occasion to dwell on Dickens's extraordinary outburst of grief—guilt, or fear of death?—at Plorn's departure. Tomalin's sympathies are all for the women—"poor Catherine," "poor Nelly"—and she makes a stylish and determined effort to turn Ellen Ternan into an interesting heroine.

The difficulty is that Nelly does not match up to Maud Gonne, Nora Barnacle, or Alice James, those other recently disinterred great men's idols, wives, or sisters. Tomalin complains that Dickens's version of Nelly in *A Tale of Two Cities,* where she appears as Lucie Manette, is a golden-haired, blue-eyed, perfect blank; and she puts this down to his general incompetence in characterizing women, who are mostly, she says, about as sexual as wax fruit. (This doesn't do justice to his brilliantly imagined neurotics and rebels, such as Tattycoram and Miss Wade in *Little Dorrit.*) But what evidence there is suggests that Ellen wasn't very characterful, and she tends, in spite of Tomalin's best efforts, to remain somewhat invisible.

What is wonderfully vivid in Tomalin's book, however, is her account of the hard lives of Victorian women actresses, who had freedom of a kind but were all too often treated as prostitutes, and had to work tirelessly. One of Tomalin's examples, a provincial actress named Charlotte Deans, "ran away from a prosperous home to marry an actor and spent seventy years tramping the north of England and Scotland as a strolling player," with ten children by her first husband and seven by her second. With relish and energy, Tomalin also brings other remarkable women to light, such as Caroline Maynard, the "fallen woman" whom Dickens helped as part of his work, part philanthropic and part voyeuristic, with Miss Burdett-Coutts at "Urania Cottage," his home for "unhappy" girls. Tomalin makes much more of her than Ackroyd does, bringing to life the dignity and intelligence of this minor character.

She also draws lively portraits of Ellen's more interesting sisters. It seems that Dickens fixed on the most malleable and least challenging of the Ternan girls. Both Fanny and Maria Ternan had promising acting careers: Fanny, a firm character, married Trollope's brother and became a novelist and biographer; Maria left a boring husband at 35 and became a redoubtable traveler and journalist, going off alone to Italy, Egypt, and Africa. The three sisters

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remained close friends and conspired to keep the family secret. Their solidarity provides a heartening contrast to this unhappy story of obsession and concealment.

Tomalin's elegant, coherent, original book, fired by a feminist analysis, has more obvious current appeal than Ackroyd's messy, inconclusive, and repetitive biography. Still, for all the exasperation that Ackroyd's book inevitably evokes, it stands as an awkward but ambitious attempt to come to grips with a great writer. We may prefer to read the ingenious disinterring of a hidden woman's story, rather than an idiosyncratic new version of the genius who exploited her. And Tomalin's book is certainly skillful and enjoyable. But Ackroyd's cluttered and contradictory biography is, I believe, the more important, even if there were times when I could have happily taken the bread knife to it.

HERMIONE LEE is the author of *Willa Cather: Double Lives* (Pantheon).

She the People

BY KAREN LEHRMAN

Object Lessons by Anna Quindlen

(Random House, 272 pp., $19)

For nearly three years devoted readers turned weekly to Anna Quindlen's "Life in the 30's" column in "The Living Section" of *The New York Times* for updates on her life (lawyer husband, two sons, Victorian rowhouse in Hoboken), reflections on her past (Catholic schooling, mother's death), and her feelings about being female. Quindlen was the thirtysomething girl next door, chatting about the ordinary and often intimate details of her life. The column was continually praised for its honesty, ingenuity, and courage, and when it stopped running in 1988 her fans wrote letters expressing hurt, anger, betrayal.

But she needed a break; covering herself was "emotionally exhausting." So she had another baby and wrote a novel. The *Times*, however, wanted Quindlen back, this time on its op-ed page, twice a week, discussing the issues of the day. The new column is called "Public & Private," and though it doesn't seem to have yet developed the soap-operatic following of its predecessor, it is widely read. Once again Quindlen is perceived as a fresh voice, a counterpoint to the stuffy, often abstract political analysis of her colleagues on the page. Her reputation and her style rest, in fact, on a proud anti-elitism, on her supposed rapport with the thoughts and feelings of ordinary people.

Object Lessons, her first novel, is also about ordinary people, a large Irish Catholic family in suburban New York experiencing a collective identity crisis. The story revolves around Maggie, who is 12. During one summer in the late '60s, her grandfather dies, her mother almost has an affair, her bitchy cousin gets pregnant, her best friend deserts her for a cooler crowd, and a boy likes her. Quindlen's foray into fiction builds on the narrative talents she showed in her prepunditry days, when she was the youngest reporter and the first woman to write the *Times*'s "About New York" column. In roughly a thousand words of detailed description, she managed to entice the reader into an often prosaic world, give it realistic contours, even impart some of the momentum of a story.

In the larger compass of a novel, however, Quindlen clearly has not figured out how to construct a fully imagined plot or to create credible characters. *Object Lessons* is very much a generic coming-of-age novel, for Maggie, for her family, and in a sense for the author as well. Caught between the cultures of an Irish grandfather who dotes on her and an Italian mother who ignores her, Maggie goes through the summer testing her loyalties to each, and finds that she's most comfortable (surprise!) just being herself. As Quindlen writes in her last line, Maggie learned that "the voice she was hearing [inside her head] was her own, for the first time in her life."

It's an unwitting comment on one of the central problems of the novel. Quindlen struggles unsuccessfully for control over the voice of her protagonist, which fluctuates distractingly between improbable naïveté and world-weary cynicism. The difficulty is a familiar one in first novels that bear an autobiographical burden, as this one plainly does. Establishing imaginative distance from a younger self, however disguised, is not easy.

Her other characters rarely rise above caricatures: there's the gruff and authoritarian grandfather who calls his grandchildren "imbeciles," and there are his mindlessly obedient sons and their insipid suburban housewives. The only intelligent, independent females (other than, presumably, Maggie) are Aunt Margaret, who is a nun, and Maggie's best friend's beautiful sister, whose own maturation is marked by the wearing of diaphanous clothes with minimal underwear. No wonder Maggie has trouble envisaging an adult life for herself. Quindlen offers an array of women whose lives have been circumscribed in one way or another by their "feminine" natures, and she can't seem to decide how much to celebrate and how much to condemn their plight. The turning point for Maggie's mother, for example, comes when she realizes that her ability to accept her fate as tireless mother of a large brood and to forgive her despotic father-in-law and his family for all their abuse—her ability, in short, to be passive, compassionate, and unselfish—made her "stronger" than her rebellious husband.

This apparent rationalization of often self-destructive, stereotypically female traits parallels the facile, melodramatic *Ladies' Home Journal* style of the book (he "kissed the frown from between her eyebrows"), which is clearly below Quindlen's standards. In fact, the most perplexing question the novel raises is, to whom is it supposed to appeal? Is Quindlen intentionally writing down, aiming at an audience of ordinary people (say, suburban housewives)?

Probably not. But condescension is not altogether foreign to Quindlen's writing. It's the danger lurking at the heart of her larger enterprise. To assume the role of literary and journalistic conduit for unsung Americans is to run the risk of a patronizing tone (especially when you're a star *New York Times* reporter with a dream job) and an oversimplifying perspective. In her "Life" columns, Quindlen suffered from the customary myopia that afflicts confessionals. Self-analysis parading as generational analysis can't help being presumptuous. In fact, it's a convention of the genre: in exchange for her commitment to her readers' mundane concerns, Quindlen earned the right to assume their commitment to hers.

The issue of Quindlen's tone and perspective has acquired a new dimension

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in her "Public & Private" columns, which will be read long after her novel has sunk from sight. Here the larger pretensions and problems become clearer. Her journalistic career has been based on the belief that the woman's voice—the voice of compassion, humanity, softness—is missing from newspapers in general. She has now been given the chance to make it heard not just in the confines of the "women's pages" (of which the "Living" section is really just a restyled version), but on the op-ed page, where "hard," that is, male, analysis reigns. "Perhaps along with everything else, newspapers, magazines, television need to be the back fences for people, now that those fences are gone," Quindlen told a gathering of fellow journalists in a lecture last year. "We used to come off as authority figures, and I think softening up can only make us more attractive."

In her "Life" columns, Quindlen seemed at times to be trying to shock *New York Times* readers with her "femaleness," her daring intimacy. Exhibitionism was a way of establishing the common woman's touch; no subject was too personal to discuss. (One column detailed the various aspects of her son's "secret life.") She still sometimes flaunts her openness, but her larger objective now seems to be showing readers the "woman's" way of understanding political issues: emphasizing the personal more than the political; looking at the world emotionally, not rationally; making everything into an object lesson. "I've never been very good at looking at the big picture," she once wrote. "It has been customary to take people's pain and lessen our own participation in it by turning it into an issue, not a collection of human beings." And in another column she explained her modus operandi: "Whenever my response to an important subject is rational and completely cerebral, I know there is something wrong with it. . . . I have always been governed by my gut."

Humanizing political issues, of course, is a worthy and often neglected pursuit, and Quindlen can be quite good at it. Indeed, the "Public & Private" pieces that most resemble her "New York" columns in their colorful reporting are a welcome departure from the often dry policy memoranda that accompany them on the page. One was a painful description of crack babies at a Bronx hospital, another was about an unusual project for disadvantaged kids run by nuns. Though Quindlen sometimes succumbs to mawkishness and can't resist a sermonizing note, these columns succeed because she doesn't try to wring a general point about the world from her discovery of one part of it: she arrives, she evokes a scene, she leaves.

Most of her columns, however, offer a lesson to be learned. Either Quindlen will generalize from a specific incident (elevating the private to the public), or she will take an important issue like the budget or the recession and tell us what ordinary people think, or more accurately, feel about it (reducing the public to the private). Quindlen's approach represents a repudiation of the notion of critical distance. She is a remorseless sentimentalist who ends up trivializing matters of considerable importance.

Consider a column from last October, which discussed a documentary made about the meatpackers' strike in Austin, Minnesota, in 1985. "The people at the Hormel plant believed in a certain kind of America," Quindlen tells us. "They went on strike because the company wanted to cut wages to stay competitive." Now their children live "on rice and kitchen-table speeches. . . . A grown man sits in front of [the] camera and says, tears running into the ruts of his face, 'All I want to do is go to work.' " Quindlen then extrapolates from this scene of individual pain to the proclamation that the nation is in a depression. She doesn't know how "economists define a depression" so she looks the word up in Webster's, which says it is " 'a period of low economic activity marked esp. by unemployment' as well as 'a state of feeling sad.' That covers it, I think." Except that it doesn't begin to.

The reverence for ordinary people is an old device of New York columnists, and Quindlen may be, in her way, the first woman to join the company of Hamill, Breslin, McAlary, and the rest of the bartender-as-philosopher-king crowd. But her pose of ordinariness (who *are* these ordinary people, anyway?) is often harder to tolerate. Quindlen adduces ordinary people as proof for her pronouncements, as if it were obvious that they see the world as she does. In another moist complaint about the national economy, in which she deprived herself of the use of a dictionary, Quindlen wrote that a "recession committee" meets nearly every week in her supermarket. When "the bill is $20 higher than it was a year ago," the women at the checkout counters silently declare a recession. The ironic tone is deceiving. It doesn't seem to matter to Quindlen that she gets rudimentary economics wrong: higher costs are the sign of inflation, not recession (a period of reduced economic activity that tends to hold prices down). What's important is that she get her point across: "Women experience the economy on what you might call a reality level. We buy bread." Presumably men, who must be buying less delicate things like houses or college educations, experience the economy theoretically.

Even when a private individual actually finds herself in the middle of a public debate, Quindlen can't seem to strike a balance between empathy and analysis. Instead she self-consciously refuses to discuss the issues, abstract and practical, at stake in the debate, and assumes that bringing her sensibility to bear on the thoughts and the feelings of the central character is revelation enough. In a column about the Baby M case, she presents herself as the one honest witness who has been missing from the scene. Describing her visit with Mary Beth Whitehead-Gould, the biological mother, she writes: "It would be good for everyone in the business of passing judgment . . . to see her . . . staring out into a backyard full of toys, wondering whether her children will have to give up someone they love because once, in the white glare of the world court, their mother refused to do the same."

By defining the post-feminist woman's voice in politics as one that "communicates" the problems of the world to us, and renouncing the assistance of law or logic, Quindlen has staked out a position in the feminist debate over the competing claims of gender equality and gender difference. She evidently wants to offer a more comprehensive woman's view than Ellen Goodman, who writes about so-called women's issues (child care, abortion, domesticity) but makes no pretensions to reach for anything grander or to offer a "feminine" analysis. And she evidently expects to be taken no less seriously as a political analyst than Meg Greenfield, whose commentary barely hints at gender.

The result, however, is a journalistic world in which women are continually constrained by their "femaleness." This is reflected not only in the perspective of the columns, but in her style and choice of issues. Though Quindlen clearly set out to write about all political issues, most of her columns focus on "women's issues," or on such problems as homelessness, child poverty, teen pregnancy. She routinely complains that only women care about these issues, but her treatment of them perpetuates the fallacy that they are only women's issues.

Her columns are riddled with ancient stereotypes, with housewives who raise the children, and do all the shopping and cooking and cleaning. And the style that she has adopted betrays her clichéd

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Secretary Baker's Peace Mission

Are he and the President putting pressure in the right places?

In the wake of the Gulf War, which many now believe we ended too early, Saddam Hussein and his army have inflicted the most horrible genocidal slaughter on the defenseless Kurds. But the President and Secretary Baker initially paid only cursory attention to this disaster, even though it is partly of our own doing. They are mostly fixated on the so-called "Israel-Palestinian conflict" and they are bringing renewed pressure on Israel to yield "land for peace".

What are the facts?

■ The Secretary may be handicapped by the fact that, until his recent visits, he had no real knowledge, no "feel" for the country and its unique problems. That is the more regrettable since Israel is certainly the closest (and perhaps only reliable) ally the United States has in the entire region. If he had deeper knowledge, he would realize that in the absence of any reliable and enduring peace with the Arab countries, Israel could not give up any of its strategic heartland, the so-called "West Bank". From the heights of the Judean hills, which he would have Israel yield to the Arabs, one can literally overlook Zion Square in Jerusalem, Ben Gurion Airport, and most of Israel's population centers, industrial plant, and military installations. One shivers at the thought of what would have happened to Israel if Saddam Hussein, instead of having launched his relatively innocuous Scud missiles from 450 miles away, could have positioned his armor, his planes and his missiles in the "West Bank" or on those Judean mountain ridges.

■ There are those who claim that, in these days of airplanes and missiles, territorial depth is of no military significance and that Israel should therefore not hesitate to relinquish the "West Bank" and Gaza in order to attain peace. But that is fallacious reasoning. Israel, according to the assessment of every knowledgeable military person, would be naked and indefensible if it were to yield those territories. If Israel did not control those territories it would, in case of surprise attack, be cut in half at its narrow waist before it had time to mobilize. Why the President and Secretary Baker continue to press this suicidal course on its most reliable ally in the area is a mystery. Is it because they don't really understand the murderous intentions of the Arabs toward Israel? The goal of the Arabs is not the establishment of a "Palestinian State" on the "West Bank". No, the real goal of the Arabs, embedded in the Charter of the PLO and never repudiated, is the total annihilation of the state of Israel. The presence of the "infidel Jews" in their midst is an unacceptable affront to the Arabs. The Palestinian state is a sideshow. Its purpose is to serve as a launching pad for the last "jihad" — finally to chase the Jews into the sea "where they belong".

■ And there are those who say that Israel doesn't really need any strategic depth. All that is needed would be guarantees by the United Nations and a mutual security treaty, which the United States would probably grant if Israel were to yield to pressure and would give up the "West Bank". The United States is undoubtedly the best friend and the greatest benefactor that Israel has. But Israel simply can't afford to entrust its security to a third party. Even with the best of intentions, the United States is far away. It took our country several months, and under ideal conditions, to build up a force to fight and defeat Saddam Hussein. If Israel were attacked — not just by Iraq, but by probably five or six other Arab countries, no help could possibly arrive in time if the enemy were poised, not beyond the Jordan, but on the outskirts of Jerusalem and within a few miles of Tel Aviv.

Our country has saved both Kuwait and Saudi Arabia from total destruction and from becoming provinces of Iraq . It is therefore disappointing that the President and the Secretary of State decided to lean, not on the Arabs but on Israel in order to bring about peace in the Middle East. One could have hoped for some gratitude at least from those two countries. Secretary Baker, as a first step in his peace mission, could have asked the Arabs to terminate their state of belligerency against Israel, to end their commercial boycott against Israel that has been in effect for over 40 years (long before Israel came into the administration of the disputed territories), and to renounce the slanderous equation that "Zionism is racism". But there is no leaning on the Arabs who, just barely having escaped their annihilation, are now as insolent and as arrogant as before. By leaning on Israel and by the constant repetition of the shopworn mantra of "land for peace", the President and the Secretary of State are endangering the only democracy in that wide area of the world and are instead giving comfort to the tyrannical Arab regimes, who are no friends of ours. The pressure is being put in the wrong place and it is applied in the wrong direction.

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assumptions about these women. It also suggests that they are the audience she has in mind. She's fond of soap opera allusions ("Time has stopped. So do our hearts, each time a clinch on 'One Life to Live' is punctuated by the words 'We interrupt this program to bring you a special report [about the war]' "), and her metaphors are typically homey, no matter the subject: "Most people agree that Saddam Hussein is pond scum and that he can't be permitted to take Kuwait as though it were the lunch money of the littlest kid in class." Or, "The ground war took less time than it takes to get over the flu."

Men in Quindlen's columns have not moved much beyond the platitudes of the '50s either. They're controlled by their bosses, they don't have time for the kids, they don't want to change diapers. (She once devoted a whole column to the idea that men need women around to eat right.) Unlike their female counterparts, however, these men are continually criticized. One "Life" column actually proclaimed that "Women are Just Better." Another divided the adult male species into irresponsible yet fun Boyfriends and boring yet dutiful Husbands. A recent column compared men to "servile and salivating" dogs (while women are like "free and independent" cats).

In proclaiming the superiority of "female" qualities, Quindlen is very much in post-feminist vogue. It's unclear whether she believes that these virtues are genetically determined, or whether she accepts the prevailing psychological interpretation of other theorists, such as Carol Gilligan, who argue that an infant daughter's sexual identification with her mother fosters a sense of attachment to others. Both theories try to turn the tables on the traditional disparagement of these qualities, but they end up with the same retrograde implications. You can argue that the heartless public world needs enlightenment from the guardians of the domestic and the private sphere, but it's an argument that can easily backfire: if the realm of the home is so rich and so pure, why should women be eager to leave it? Hasn't the "superior" quality of selflessness often allowed women to become victims of exploitation and harassment by their employers (let alone batterings by their husbands)? If women do have a greater capacity for intimacy and relationships, why does it follow that this "strength" should be applied to all aspects of life, especially at the expense of rationality? Surely the world is a lot more complicated than the "web of relationships . . . sustained by a process of communication" that Gilligan

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has argued women believe it to be.

Quindlen seems dead to the fact that she is battening upon some of the hoariest and most demeaning images of women. The limits of her perspective were perhaps nowhere so clear as in her recent writing about the Gulf war, during which she presented herself not merely as Woman, but also as Mother. Here, too, she seemed taken by the fashionable theory that instructs us that mothers, because of their mothering, are our ideal teachers, uniquely qualified to tell us what's wrong with the world. Mothers know how to help the homeless, the minorities, the handicapped, the aged—all because they've had to rear children.

The centerpiece of motherhood politics is the issue of war and peace. Life givers can't be life takers, and so on. Quindlen's treatment of this issue exposes the inadequacies of maternal analysis. "War has a human face," Quindlen wrote in January. "This is a good thing. It is a good thing to write a story about people as well as programs and policies because it makes us understand. . . . All of this war will be one little person after another." Certainly it needs to be asked of a war whether it's worth a single human life. But that's hardly the end of thought on the matter. Looking at individual soldiers doesn't quite help us to understand the larger moral, historical, and political issues involved. War is of course a puerile, uncivilized way to resolve conflicts. But only rational analysis, which Quindlen avoids, can determine if a conflict can be solved without war.

Quindlen clearly believes that if pacific, life-affirming women ran the world, we would never get into these messes. That would be nice, but this logic (so to speak) cannot account for Margaret Thatcher, Indira Gandhi, and Golda Meir, none of whom flinched from the use of force. Were they coerced by patriarchical power structures? OK, then why do so many mothers—oozing "biophilia," that essential maternal trait—fail to raise peace-loving sons? Perhaps that is the influence of the fathers. Or perhaps males are genetically programmed for violence. If so, how are our women leaders supposed to relate nonviolently to the men who might still run a country or two?

The women who lead states should earn their position not with some innate or learned peacefulness, but with an ability to discuss and decide difficult matters rationally. And the women who write political commentary should be read not because they have some gender-based talent for empathy, but because they have something to say. Our standard, arid political discourse would surely benefit from a certain amount of immersion in concrete human experience; but this is not the same as sentimentality, and it is not women's work. In her insistent presentation of herself as a type—"a woman columnist with children and an urban feminist sensibility," as she puts it—Quindlen betrays her lack of trust in herself as a writer capable of detachment even from womanhood, as a thinking human being with a mind that can get beyond the body. "Perhaps it was a particularly female thing about me," she once wrote, "but I did not feel qualified, when I was young, to be an individualist. I felt that by birth I was part of a group." Maybe it's time that Quindlen, like Maggie, began to listen to her own voice. It might prove to be one of her more useful object lessons. ●

CORRESPONDENCE *continued from page 6*

sities have speech codes. I have no idea whether that figure is accurate. However, my own experience is not in accord with Mr. Kinsley's argument as to who or what was involved in creating university speech codes. In the 1970s the Smith faculty adopted a code designed to protect invited speakers from being shouted down or being prevented from speaking by force. The adoption of the code, which was overwhelmingly supported by liberals on the faculty, came after a number of nasty incidents. I would hope that Mr. Kinsley supports such speech codes, civil libertarian that he is.

On the other hand, some of the newer codes, two of which were overturned by the courts, have attempted to interfere with speech by stating that any stereotype (such as that men are, in general, stronger than women) is punishable even up to being fired from the university. The Smith faculty again voted overwhelmingly to reject a code of that kind that the administration sought to press upon us, and the great majority of liberals agreed that it should be rejected.

I trust that Mr. Kinsley, when he thinks about it, recognizes the difference between these two kinds of codes. He doesn't seem to in his column, and he gives conservatives far too much credit when he asserts that they were the authors of both types of faculty initiatives. Indeed, as the writings of Irving Howe, Eugene Genovese, and Nat Hentoff demonstrate, liberals and many radicals at least are as concerned with threats to academic freedom as are conservatives.

In any event, thanks to publications like TNR and other journals, some of the advocates of repression are now saying that they really didn't mean it after all. That's all to the good.

STANLEY ROTHMAN
Northampton, Massachusetts

The writer is Mary Huggins Gamble Professor of Government at Smith College.

To the editors:

Michael Kinsley observes that conservative students are more visible now than in his own salad days. But that does not prove what he thinks it does. In fact, conservatism is gaining strength in *reaction* to the radicalization of the curriculum and of student life.

Mr. Kinsley turns the charge of orthodoxy against those who want to retain required courses in Western culture. This, which would be clever if it were original, merely reflects the prevailing dogma, that the new regimen of uniformly radical studies represents a diversity of supposed female, black, Third World, and homosexual points of view, while the great works of Western civilization present only a single (white, male) point of view. Surely Mr. Kinsley has actually read some of the latter works and has only forgotten for the moment that they present a true diversity of ideas, including revolutionary ideas and liberating principles now being trivialized and distorted on American campuses.

The wealth of knowledge, the enormous diversity of ideas, and the vigorous debate embodied in the Western tradition are the enemies of the shallow radicalism and narrow orthodoxy that now reign in the academy. That is why the proponents of the latter have as their first priority to destroy the former.

THOMAS SHORT
Gambier, Ohio

The writer is associate professor of philosophy at Kenyon College.

Rights to life

To the editors:

Your Notebook item "Carter Xiaoping" (May 20) unfairly implies that the former president sold out his principles on human rights by agreeing that socialist nations such as the People's Republic of China honor human rights in a different and compelling way. But hundreds of us heard Mr. Carter make exactly the same argument in August 1989, in Atlanta, to the American Political Science Association. The problem is not that he is a born-again "Beijing apologist"; it is that he has never understood the difference between a human (or better, natural) right and desirable social policy. In other words, he never had any principles on human rights to begin with.

KEN MASUGI
Washington, D.C.

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

Rhythm and Jews

I WAS TOO YOUNG IN 1967 TO GET A psychic boost from Israel's romp in the Six-Day War, but I do remember feeling a surge of ethnic pride when Ken Holtzman pitched a no-hitter for the Chicago Cubs in 1970. I'm not entirely sure Holtzman is a co-religionist, but at the time I thought he was, and drew nourishment from the idea. Like most Jewish kids growing up in the shadow of Wrigley Field, I spent much of early childhood fighting the presumption that we Weisbergs and Rosenbergs and Markses were better at jobs like nuclear physicist and constitutional lawyer than shortstop and left tackle. I was undeterred by cruel jokes of the kind told in the movie *Airplane*:

> Passenger: I'd like something light to read.
> Stewardess: How about this pamphlet on great Jewish athletes?

I prepared my brief by assembling a mental list of Jewish sports heroes. But to tell the truth, my catalog never had more than about ten names. So it was with great expectation of finally putting to rest the myth of Jewish athletic inferiority that I went to the Grand Hyatt last week for the Gala Inaugural Dinner of the B'nai B'rith Sports Hall of Fame.

THIS TURNED OUT TO BE AN EVEN weirder occasion than I expected: Jack Kemp and Bill Bradley shared the dais with baseball commissioner Fay Vincent and Cantor Arnold Saltzman of Congregation Adas Israel, who sang "The Star-Spangled Banner," the Hatikvah, and "Take Me Out to the Ballgame" in Hebrew, wearing a baseball cap. After the rabbi's invocation, Larry King of CNN took the floor as master of ceremonies, which meant telling the usual borderline-offensive ethnic jokes and indulging in a great deal of cultural boosterism. "When my dear friend Duke Zeibert told me that the B'nai B'rith was going to have this wonderful idea for a hall of fame to honor Jewish sports heroes, I felt particularly attune to it, having grown up in this *terrific* faith," King said. Would you buy a used creed from this man? After warming up the lodge brothers for a few more minutes, he introduced the introducers of the Hebrew hall-of-famers. The baseball players inducted were Hank Greenberg of the Detroit Tigers, Al Rosen of the Cleveland Indians, and the great Dodger pitcher Sandy Koufax, who earned Sunday school immortality by sitting out the first game of the 1965 World Series because it was Yom Kippur. Swimming was represented by Mark Spitz, tennis by Dick Savitt, who became the first Jew to win Wimbledon in 1951, basketball by Dolph Shayes, and football by Sid Luckman, a legendary Chicago Bears quarterback. Efforts to find Jewish representatives in the fields of ice hockey, rugby, and water polo were unavailing.

AMONG THOSE PRESENT who pretty clearly did not grow up in our terrific faith were the Redskinettes, who led off the entertainment with a lascivious display of pom-pom dancing. Throughout, I kept thinking of Lenny Bruce's great "Negroes are all Jews" monologue, the one in which he defends the proposition that anyone who lives in New York is Jewish, whereas everyone who lives in Minneapolis is goyish, whether he's Jewish or not. "I'm Jewish. Count Basie is Jewish. Ray Charles is Jewish," the routine begins. "B'nai B'rith is goyish.... Baton-twirling is very goyish."

SINCE LATE ADOLESCENCE, I'VE been even more interested in unmasking Jewish rock stars. Call me obsessive, but a strong case can be made for Semitic pre-eminence in this field. Starting with the '60s folk scene, Bob Dylan, Phil Ochs, Leonard Cohen, Simon and Garfunkel, and at least 33 percent of Peter, Paul & Mary were you-know-whatish. In the '70s Jews ruled the category of album-oriented rock, with Carole King, Janis Ian, Carly Simon, Phoebe Snow, Manfred Mann, Randy Newman, and Warren Zevon dominating the playlists of "progressive" stations. Moving from FM to AM, Jewish rockers played in Fleetwood Mac, the J. Geils Band, T-Rex, Journey, and Kiss. There are a number of Jewish metal heads, for example David Lee Roth, formerly of Van Halen. And let's not forget Marty Friedman, who plays chainsaw for the anti-nuke speed-metal group Megadeth. Punk was invented by a Scottish Jew: Malcolm McLaren, the brains behind the Sex Pistols. And Joey Ramone, of the Ramones, was, you guessed it, Jewish. Does this sound like a B'nai B'rith hall of fame in the making, or what? I suspect Paul Westerberg of the Replacements is not Jewish. Bruce Springsteen, I'm sorry to say, definitely isn't. But Max Weinberg, the drummer for his E-Street band, was, or is. I'm not clear on Jonathan Richman, but he should be. Lou Reed is. Ringo Starr was often believed to be Jewish because of his large schnoz and sense of humor, but is not. However, both Linda McCartney (née Epstein) and Beatles manager Brian Epstein (no relation) are. None of the Rolling Stones is. But, in the spirit of Lenny Bruce, I think it's reasonable to assert that Elvis Costello is Jewish. Marvin Gaye was also a Jew. New Kids on the Block are goyish. Madonna is very goyish.

THE DISTRICT OF COlumbia has more employees per capita than any big-city government in the country, but good luck getting one of them on the telephone. Despite what appear to be the best of intentions, Mayor Dixon has so far done little to energize the catatonic bureaucracy. Like most Washington residents, I steer clear of it whenever possible. Sometimes, however, an encounter is unavoidable. About two months ago the Mount Pleasant house I share was burgled. As break-ins go, it wasn't bad; we lost a TV, a VCR, and a few odds and ends. Two officers responded to the call. They took fingerprints and urged us to move to the suburbs. They said someone would be in touch within a few days. That was in March. As it got into April, I called the Georgia Avenue Police District. According to the guy who answered the phone, a Detective Woods was on the case and would call shortly. Days passed. I left more messages for Mr. Woods. I forgot about it for another week, then called again, only to be told no Woods was on the force. A few days later I called again. Woods had been located, and had the case on his desk. How was it coming? I asked. The desk sergeant said Woods had a bit of a backlog and probably hadn't started on our investigation just yet. How soon could I expect to hear something? About six months. Did all investigators have such a long backlog? Not exactly, but unless I could name a suspect, we were stuck waiting. Sergeant Cephas did say she would move our file to the top of the pile. We still haven't heard from Mr. Woods. From the name, I assume he isn't Jewish. Most great detectives are, but don't get me started.

JACOB WEISBERG

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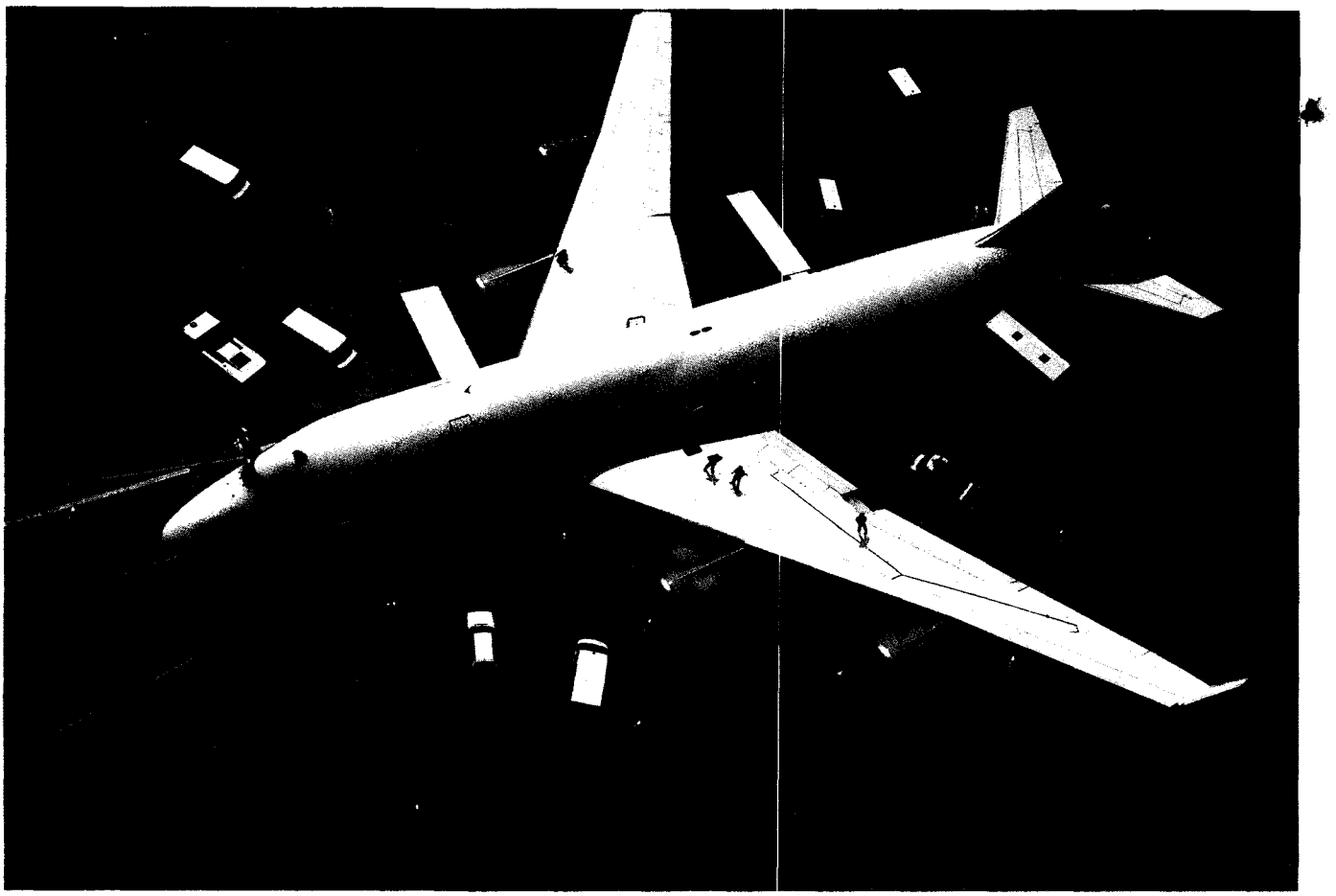

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